

Appendix B.2: DSHS Leadership Interview/Focus Group Protocols

Note to Reviewers: This appendix includes protocols for DSHS Leadership, who will not be involved in Case Study Review discussions.

For the supervisors of program group-serving staff and office leadership, the research team will decide whether to conduct semi-structured interviews with individual staff or focus groups with groups of staff based on the offices' staffing structure and needs as we develop our site visit agendas. However, we will use the same protocols for either approach, and the maximum number of staff with whom we will speak will remain the same regardless of the method selected.

For the DSHS agency leadership, we will conduct one focus group, likely at the agency headquarters in Olympia, WA.

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Supervisor and Leadership Interview/Focus Group Introduction and Informed Consent

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this [interview/focus group]. Your insights are a really important part of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project. The goal of the project is to explore ways that we can apply behavioral science—which uses psychology and economics—to help better serve families.

We're interested in understanding how WorkFirst supervisors, CSO leadership, and DSHS leadership perceived the BIAS-NG project overall as it relates to office operations and its intended effect on parent engagement in the WorkFirst program. We want to hear your thoughts about how the intervention we designed and implemented along with the state has operated as well as any ideas you have that might help improve the intervention.

I will record the conversation in order to make sure we capture the information correctly, but you can tell us if you would like us to remove anything you have said from the [interview/focus group] transcript at any time.

[IF INTERVIEW] You may also choose not to answer questions, and you may choose to stop the interview at any time.

[IF FOCUS GROUP] If you prefer to answer questions privately, you are also welcome to share any comments with any one of us separately.

If you prefer to answer questions privately, you are also welcome to share any comments with any one of us separately

As is stated in the consent form that I'll be handing out, participation in this [interview/focus group] is voluntary, and the [interview/focus group] should take about 60 minutes (1 hour) of your time. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this collection is 0970-0502 and the expiration date is 08/31/2020.

[For Focus Groups and In-Person Interviews (Written Consent)] Please read through and sign the consent form and we can get started.

[Read and sign consent]

[For Phone Interviews (Verbal Consent)]: I will now read you a form about what it means to participate in this research, describe your rights as a participant, and ask for your consent to continue with the interview.

Informed Consent for Supervisor and Leadership Interviews/Focus Groups

You are invited to participate in an [interview/focus group] for the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project.

What is the study?

MDRC, a nonprofit social policy research organization, and its partner MEF Associates are conducting this project on behalf of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families.. Its goal is to use behavioral science, which incorporates ideas from psychology and economics, to improve communication with and participation of individuals who receive services from Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

What will I need to do?

We are talking with clients who have participated in the WorkFirst program as well as staff involved in WorkFirst services at DSHS. The [interview/focus group] will focus on your thoughts and experiences related to the WorkFirst Comprehensive Evaluation and the assignment of WorkFirst activities as well as factors shaping client participation during the BIAS-NG intervention period. This [interview/focus group] will take up to 1 hour.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this [interview/focus group]?

There are no significant risks to your participation. Sometimes people feel uncomfortable answering some questions. If that happens, you do not have to answer them. You may stop participating at any time. We would like to record your responses to help with our notes. However, if you do not want us to record, we will not. If we do record, you can ask to stop the recording at any time.

Participating in the [interview/focus group] will not benefit you directly but sharing your thoughts on the intervention may help improve the experiences of individuals involved in DSHS. We have very strong security measures in place and will make every effort to protect your privacy.

[If focus group] The nature of focus groups means that research staff cannot promise that everyone in the group will keep everything you say private. We will remind everyone to respect the privacy of their fellow participants.

Will you share information from the [interview/focus group]?

Only the study team will see the notes or hear the recordings. Your name will not be listed in any published reports, and comments will not be attributed to you. Your answers will be kept private to the extent permissible by law. We will destroy the notes and recordings at the end of the study.

Do I have to do the [interview/focus group]?

Your participation in the [interview/focus group] is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to complete. Whether or not you choose to participate will not be shared with anyone.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you can call the MDRC project director, Frieda Molina, at 212-340-8660.

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[FOR WRITTEN CONSENT] Statement

“I have read this form and agree to be in the study. I know that my participation is voluntary and that MDRC follows strict rules to protect my privacy. I know that I can refuse to answer any questions and that I can stop participating at any point.”

Name of Study Participant (Print)	Signature of Study Participant

[FOR VERBAL CONSENT]

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

- If yes, proceed.
- If no: “No problem. Thank you for your time today.”

Record response.

At this time we’d like to ask your permission to record the conversation to help us with our note taking on the conversation. No one but the research team will hear or see your responses to our questions. Do we have your permission to record this session? (Wait for verbal yes from participants)

B.2.1. Supervisors of Program Group-Serving Staff and CSO Leadership Interviews/Focus Groups

Format: Focus groups OR semi-structured interviews, TBD (60 minutes)

We're interested in understanding how [WF supervisors/CSO leadership] perceived the BIAS-NG project overall as it relates to office operations and its intended effect on parent engagement in the WorkFirst program.

Introduction

- 1) Please state your name and describe your position at DSHS.
- 2) How long have you worked in this position? In other positions at DSHS?
- 3) How many staff do you supervise?
- 4) How many of those staff were part of the group who delivered the BIAS-NG intervention?

Experience Implementing the Intervention

- 5) After the initial training for staff delivering the BIAS-NG intervention, how easy or difficult was it for staff to integrate the materials into the CE interview?
- 6) Were you involved in monitoring the way your staff implemented the intervention? If so, how?
 - a) Probe: How frequently were you in contact with BIAS-NG staff about the intervention?
- 7) How did the non-BIAS-NG staff in your unit perceive the project? What issues/questions did they ask?
 - a) Probe: Issues related to having a "specialized unit"
- 8) To what extent did non-BIAS-NG staff understand the intervention components (flashcards, blueprint implementation prompt)? What issues/questions did they ask?
- 9) How did the BIAS-NG project affect broader unit workload?
- 10) Did you have to make any operational and staffing changes in your unit in order to implement the BIAS-NG study? If so, what?
 - a) Probe: Which operational changes were easiest to make? Most challenging to make? If negative: How did you mitigate this impact on staff or resources?
- 11) What adaptations did you make to staffing or supervision over time as a result of the BIAS-NG project? What led you to do this?

Strengths, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

- 12) Overall, do you think the intervention was helpful to families? Why or why not?
- 13) Overall, do you think the intervention was helpful to staff? Why or why not?
- 14) What have been some of the biggest challenges for your unit throughout implementation?
- 15) What lessons have you learned?
- 16) What elements of the intervention or overall approach would you retain in agency policy?
- 17) Is there anything you would change about the materials themselves to make them more useful for staff as you develop a client's IRP? As you motivate clients to attend their assigned WorkFirst activity/ies?
- 18) What would you do differently next time if you were to develop an intervention designed to improve participation in the WorkFirst program?

Conclusion

19) Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience?

Thank you for your time!

B.2.2. DSHS Agency Leadership Focus Groups

Format: Focus group (60 minutes)

Introduction

We're interested in understanding how agency leadership perceived the BIAS-NG project overall as it relates to DSHS operations and its intended effect on parent engagement in the WorkFirst program.

Experience Implementing the Intervention

- 1) What were you hoping to accomplish with the BIAS-NG intervention?
- 2) What is your overall assessment of how the intervention went?
- 3) Strengths?
- 4) Challenges?
- 5) What questions or issues from staff (BIAS-NG and non-BIAS-NG) emerged throughout the course of implementation?
 - a) How did you address these?
 - b) How did other field office staff not involved in BIAS-NG perceive the intervention?
- 6) What were the primary adaptations made to the intervention over time?
 - a) What led to these changes?
- 7) What external factors may have influenced implementation?
 - a) Probe on state/field office policy shifts, other pilots, labor relations, staffing changes, forms changes
- 8) Overall, how do you think the BIAS-NG intervention affected involved clients' engagement with the WorkFirst program?
 - a) Probe on specific intervention components (flashcards, blueprint implementation prompt)

Challenges and Lessons Learned

- 9) What have been some of the biggest challenges for your agency throughout implementation?
- 10) What lessons have you learned?
- 11) What did you learn from setting up and participating in a test of the intervention? How might you use similar tests to improve other aspects of your operations?
- 12) What elements of the intervention or overall approach would you make agency policy?
- 13) Is there anything you would change about the materials themselves to make them more useful for staff as you develop a client's IRP? As you motivate retention amongst clients to attend their assigned WorkFirst activity/ies?
- 14) What would you do differently next time if you were to develop an intervention designed to improve participation in the WorkFirst program?

Conclusion

- 15) Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience?

Thank you for your time!