

Youth Focus Group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. My name is --- and this is ---. We are researchers from Westat, a company based outside of Washington DC. We are working for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (also known as "HUD") to learn about how services, supports, and housing are set up to help youth and young adults like yourselves who are having problems with housing.

We especially want to learn from your experiences and hear your ideas on:

- what you think might help other youth and young adults in [COMMUNITY],
- why particular services and supports work or do not work, and
- what could be done to better meet your needs.

You are the experts on how services and housing meet or don't meet your needs, and we are looking forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas. Your input will help HUD improve their services and supports to youth and young adults across the country.

Before we begin, we need your consent to participate in this discussion. First, I'd like you to read the consent form and then I will answer any questions you may have.

[DISTRIBUTE AND HAVE PARTICIPANTS READ CONSENT FORM.]

Does anyone have any questions? **[NOTE AND ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.]**

Ok, to summarize:

- Everything you tell us today is confidential, which means we will not share your name with anyone who is not working on this project. Since today's discussion is confidential, please don't talk outside this room about what was said here today.
- The Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response for the Youth Focus Group Interview. HUD may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection information unless that collection displays a valid OMB control number 2528-xxxx, expiring xx-xx-xxxx.
- The information requested under this collection is protected and held private in accordance with 42 U.S.C. 1306, 20 CFR 401 and 402, 5 U.S.C.552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act of 1974) and OMB Circular No. A-130.
- Being here is voluntary. You don't have to answer every question, but I do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point. However, you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

- There are no known risks to your participation today. Nothing you say today will affect the services you are receiving. Your input will help others who may be in the same situation as you are.
- Your name will not be associated with any of your responses, though we may include quotes that you provide in our reports.
- We would like to audio record our conversation today, but that's just for note-taking purposes so we don't have to write everything down. The recordings will be destroyed after they are transcribed. Do we have your permission to record the conversation?

Also, some other things I want to point out:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Our purpose for conducting this group is to hear what you think, so please speak up, especially if what you have to say is different than what someone else is saying.
- That said, please try not to interrupt anyone. It makes it difficult to hear what you are saying.
- Feel free to leave, help yourself to the snacks, or take a break whenever you need to. The bathrooms are [location].
- This discussion will last about an hour and a half.
- Please do not think I am rude if I redirect the conversation at various points. We have a lot to cover and I want to make sure we do not run overtime.

Any questions so far?

If you are willing to participate, please sign the consent form. Pass one copy forward **[COLLECT]** and please keep a copy for yourselves.

I know we've agreed to have this session recorded, but if something comes up that you would like to have off the record, please let me know and I can turn off the recorder.

[NOTETAKERS: NOTETAKERS SHOULD ALSO NOT TAKE ANY NOTES DURING THESE OFF THE RECORD COMMENTS.]

A. Introduction

[FACILITATOR and NOTETAKER: INTRODUCE YOURSELVES FIRST.]

Okay, let's get started. Please introduce yourself -- first name only and age

B. Housing Situations

Let's first talk about your housing situations.

1. In thinking about your situation, is there something that stands out to you as the main reason or reasons why you became homeless? **[NOTE: MAKE SURE ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE GIVEN A CHANCE TO SHARE THEIR STORIES]**
2. What is the one thing that would have helped you most from becoming homeless?

C. Services and Supports

Now I'd like to talk about the kinds of services and supports you've received so far and your thoughts about it.

3. Did you have to go through a process to get help? In some communities they call it coordinated entry?

Probes: Did you have to complete an assessment or fill out any forms about yourself before getting help? [IF YES] Where did you do the assessment? Did anyone ask you what your needs were? What key needs were they able to meet?

4. What kinds of services and support have you gotten while you've been homeless?

Ask about:

- **Shelter or runaway and homeless youth programs? How long were you there?**
- **Case management?**
- **Transportation?**
- **Education or employment help?**
- **Help connecting with health or mental health or drug and alcohol services?**
- **Financial support?**
- **[If parenting] child care?**
- **Things like food stamps, WIC, TANF, SSI, or legal services**

When appropriate, ask:

- **Who gave you the help? Was it a homeless provider or a non-homeless provider, such as child welfare or a school?**
- **How well did it meet your needs?**

5. What help did you need but not get?

Probes:

- **What could have made things easier for you to get the help you needed?**

D. Current and Ideal System

6. Do you think the current homeless service system is meeting the needs of youth and young adults? What are the key gaps? What do you see as the major problems that need to be addressed?
7. ***[When appropriate]*** Everyone in this group is ***[minority youth or youth of color, youth who are under 18, youth who are pregnant or have children, youth who are LGBTQ]***. What services and supports could help other young adults in your situation?
8. If you were in charge of ending youth homelessness, what would you do? What would this look like?

CLOSING

Thank you all so much for your time and for your helpful comments. This discussion really helps us understand what help is available in [COMMUNITY] and what services are needed.

We have a very brief questionnaire that we would like you to fill out with a little bit more of your background information. ***[DISTRIBUTE QUESTIONNAIRE AND PENS.]***

Before we close, do you have any questions for us?

[ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. NOTE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES.]

Thank you again.

[MAKE SURE THAT PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE PAYMENT AND SIGN RECEIPTS.]

