

# **IHE Staff Focus Group Protocol**

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## PPSS ECE Articulation Project IHE Staff Focus Group Protocol

### Key points to convey to the respondents:

- This is a study conducted by American Institutes for Research on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the study is to examine the policies and practices that supports effective higher education articulation for early care and education (ECE) workers, so that they may progress from a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) to an associate of arts degree (AA) to a bachelor of arts degree (BA) without losing relevant coursework and credits. For the purposes of this study, early childhood education refers to the care and education of children ages birth to 8.
- The goal of this study is to highlight effective ECE articulation practices to inform the work of state and higher education leaders who are developing, revising, or implementing ECE articulation policies. The final report will highlight promising practices and the specific approaches states have taken to implement articulation policy in both two-year and four-year institutions of higher education in six focal states. This study is *not* meant to evaluate any individual, program, or institution.
- Have you received the consent form for this study? We want to assure you that we will protect your privacy and the information you share will be protected to the extent provided by law. We will not use your name in any reports, although states, institutions, and/or job roles or titles may be used in some sections of the report.
- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record of our discussion. We will not share this recording with anyone outside the research team, and we will delete the recording after the final report is complete. Is that okay with you?
- Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation in this focus group at any time. Throughout the course of the focus group, if we touch on topics that you believe to be sensitive for any reason, please bring that to our attention, and we will not include these comments either in public reporting or in discussions with the U.S. Department of Education.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Some of you won't agree with each other and that's okay. Please feel free to talk about what you think, even if it's different from what someone else thinks. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in critical comments as we are positive comments, and sometimes the critical comments can be the most constructive. Even if you disagree with each other, please be respectful of other peoples' views.
- Do you have any questions about the purpose of this focus group, your privacy, or anything else?

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## Introduction

Let's start with some introductions.

### Question

1. **First, please tell me your name, what your role is at {COLLEGE}, and how are you involved in the transfer and articulation process.**

## The Articulation and Transfer Process

The next set of questions is about the articulation and transfer process at {COLLEGE}. To the extent that you can answer these questions in a way that is specifically applicable to the field of early childhood education, please do so.

### Question

2. **What state policies are in place to help ECE students transfer from certificate or associate's degree programs to bachelor's degree programs?**
3. **What system and institutional policies are in place?**

#### Probe for:

- *How does your institution balance academic quality against the burden placed on students when they lose credits during the transfer process?*
- *What input have you or your college had on the development of articulation policy?*

4. **In your institution, how are decisions made about implementing articulation policies?**

#### Probe for:

- *Who is involved?*
- *What are their roles?*

5. **Please tell me more how the transfer process works at {COLLEGE}.**

#### Probe for:

- *What kinds of information are shared between institutions, other than transcripts?*
- *How do questions about the transferability of credit get answered?*
- *How does the process vary by receiving institution?*

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Question

6. How are faculty involved in the credit transfer process?

**Probe for:**

- *[If not:] How are faculty involved in developing credit transfer policies or in oversight of the process?*

7. What resources are in place to ensure that you, as a staff member, can meet the needs of students before, during, and after the credit transfer process?

**Probe for:**

- *How are you informed about state or system transfer and articulation policies?*
- *What kind of professional development is available to you?*
- *What other resources do you wish were available?*

8. What advising services and other supports are available to help students at {COLLEGE} with the credit transfer process?

**Probe for:**

- *How are students informed about what will happen to their credits when they transfer?*
- *How well do you think students understand the credit transfer process?*
- *To what extent do the advising services address career paths and degree affordability?*
- *How does {COLLEGE} ensure these advising services are accessible to students?*

**Listen for:**

- *Who provided the advice (department or title)*
- *Advice about earning transfer credit*
- *Student understanding of the transfer process*

9. What have you heard from students about their ability to receive transfer credit for prior coursework?

**Probe for:**

- *What would make it easier for students to receive credit for prior coursework?*
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## Closing Perspectives

Last, we'd like to understand your perspective on what has worked well, and what has not, as your institution has worked to implement articulation policy.

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### Question

**10. What aspects of your institution's approach to articulation do you think work well?**

**11. Are there aspects of articulation that you think work less well, or that you would like to improve?**

**12. What are the barriers to instituting comprehensive articulation policies and procedures at {COLLEGE}?**

**Probe for:**

- *What are the challenges you face in supporting transfer students?*

**13. What steps have been taken to overcome those barriers?**

**Probe for:**

- *What other approaches could be tried to overcome the barriers?*

**14. What advice would you give to policymakers to improve articulation?**

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## Conclusion

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### Question

- **We have reached the end of the focus group. Thank you for participating and for the information you shared.**
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