

## Youth focus group protocol

**NOTE:** *This protocol is intended as a guide, not a script. The protocol has been developed to apply to youth participating in HMRE programs.*

### INTRODUCTION

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#### **Moderator and co-facilitator introductions**

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are from Mathematica Policy Research, an independent research firm, and we are here to learn about your experiences with [HMRE program name]. My name is [name] and my colleague is [name].

#### **Explanation of project and purpose of group discussion and questionnaire**

We are doing a study on classes/programs like [HMRE program name]. During our discussion today, we are interested in learning about how this program has influenced your ability to manage your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to achieve your goals. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, but we will not use any of your names, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions. All information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

*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 information collection is 0970-0355 and the expiration date is 05/31/2021.*

Before we begin our discussion, we have a short questionnaire for you to fill out. *[Distribute questionnaires and begin reading questionnaire instructions. After youth are finished, collect the questionnaire and proceed with the instructions, below.]*

#### **Ground rules for discussion**

Before we start our discussion, we want to provide guidance about how our time together will go:

- Participation in this information collection is voluntary.
- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about an hour. There will be no formal breaks. If needed, please feel free to stretch or go to the bathroom.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your input.
- To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead from time to time.

- We will be taking notes and audiotaping the session, but everything you say will be kept private. Does anyone object to us audiotaping the discussion?
- Each person here today will receive \$25 to show our appreciation for your feedback.

## QUESTIONS

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### **A. Introductions**

1. To start, please introduce yourself.

### **B. Feedback on questionnaire**

*Before we begin talking about [HMRE program name], I'd like to get your feedback on the questionnaire you just completed.*

2. Were any of the items or sections confusing or hard to understand?
3. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Could you see any items making someone else uncomfortable?
4. When you were asked to think about the [staff title] you've worked with the most during the program, did you have any trouble choosing a person to think about?
5. Do you have any additional feedback to share on the questionnaire?

### **C. Motivation for enrolling in program**

*Now let's talk about how you learned about [HMRE program name] and why you enrolled.*

6. How did you first hear about [HMRE program name]?
7. When the program started, what were you hoping to get out of it? What were you most excited to learn about?
8. How would you describe [HMRE program name] to someone your age who you just met?

### **D. Satisfaction with program climate**

*Next, I'd like to discuss your impressions of the program climate.*

9. Do you feel like participants in the program get along well with each other? Why or why not?
10. Do you feel like participants listen to each other and respect each other's opinions? Why or why not?

11. Do you feel like you had opportunities to be part of class discussions and activities? Why or why not?
12. Do you look forward to coming to the program? Why or why not?
13. How much do you feel like your [staff title] contributes to the program climate? Are there any specific things your [staff title] does to make the program a positive place?
  - a. *Probe:* setting ground rules, encouraging youth to participate and listen to each other, encouraging youth to identify and talk about their feelings, providing positive reinforcement

### **E. Group workshops**

*Next, I'd like to learn about the group workshops.*

14. What topics have been covered during the group workshops?
  - a. Has the class addressed: [*probe on strategies for calming down after an argument, labeling and expressing feelings, seeing things from other people's perspectives, setting goals, making decisions, solving problems, communication skills, managing time and priorities*]
15. What topics have been the most enjoyable/interesting? What topics have been the least enjoyable/interesting?
16. Have you tried to use any of these skills outside of [HMRE program name]? How did it go?

### **F. One-on-one meetings**

*Next, I'd like to learn about the one-on-one meetings with your [staff title].*

17. What topics have you covered during the one-on-one meetings with your [staff title]?
  - a. Have the meetings addressed: [*probe on strategies for calming down after an argument, labeling and expressing feelings, seeing things from other people's perspectives, setting goals, making decisions, solving problems, communication skills, managing time and priorities*]?
18. What topics have been the most enjoyable/interesting? What topics have been the least enjoyable/interesting?
19. Have you tried to use any of these skills outside of [HMRE program name]? How did it go?
20. What qualities do you think are important for a [staff title] to have? Do you think your [staff title] possesses these qualities?
21. Do you feel comfortable asking your [staff title] for advice about issues you're going through? Why or why not?

22. Do you feel like you have a close relationship with your [staff title]? Why or why not?

**G. Overall satisfaction with strategies for managing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors**

*Now, let's discuss what you learned about how to manage your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from participating in this program*

23. What do you think you've learned from this program about managing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors?
- a. *Probe:* understanding yourself better, understanding what you want for the future, being able to plan or take steps to achieve your goals, knowing what to do when you feel overwhelmed or upset
24. How will this knowledge help you in the future? Has it helped you already; how?
- a. *Probe:* managing time, improving communication skills, succeeding in school/career, building supportive friendships/romantic relationships

*That concludes our questions for today. Thank you again for taking time to answer our questions. Does anyone have a question or comment they'd like to share before we end?*

[Distribute gift cards]