Descriptive Study of the URM Program: Interview Guide for Community Partners [Education]

Guidance for Review of URM Site Visit Interview Guides

The Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program information collection request includes five interview guides (Attachments D-H). The different guides focus on different sets of respondents, and each respondent will participate in only one interview during the site visits. There are some subjects that will be useful to cover with different sets of respondents, and therefore many questions are identical or similar across the guides (specifically Appendices D, E, G, and H). To help reviewers know which questions are shared across all guides, we have included a parenthetical note for each question that is asked across multiple interview guides. An asterisk indicates that the corresponding question contains small differences from the other guides, but the question is still very similar. For example, multiple guides contain questions asking the respondent to describe their place of work, but the wording is slightly different: the guide for interviewing school staff asks the respondent to describe their "school," while the guide for interviewing staff of other types of partners asks the respondent to describe their "organization."

Below are some examples to illustrate what we mean:

> Example 1: What is your official job title? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, G, and H)**

> Example 2: Please briefly describe your school, including the programs and services your school provides. **(Asked in Appendix G*)** *Here, the asterisk indicates that "school" is replaced by "organization" in other guides, but the basic structure of the question is the same.*

<div align="center">

DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS OF STAFF OF URM PROGRAMS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

</div>

You are invited to participate in an interview for a study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. This form will help you decide if you want to participate in the study.

Background

Researchers from two companies, MEF Associates and Child Trends, are conducting the study under contract to the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its goal is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the URM Program.

What will I need to do?

We are talking with individuals who help implement or operate URM programs, as well as individuals who help implement or operate other programs and services accessed by unaccompanied refugee minors in the same communities. This interview will take about 60 minutes. Interview topics focus on features of your organization; services provided by the URM Program; services youth who are part of the program receive from other organizations; partnerships between local URM programs and other organizations and agencies; the experiences of youth in the program as they adjust to life in the U.S.; and data that might support future evaluations.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this interview?

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.

Participating in the interview will not help you directly, but sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the services offered through the URM Program.

Will you share information from the interview?

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?

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. Your participation will have no effect on your employment.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you can call the project director, Sam Elkin at MEF Associates at 703-838-2722.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you can contact Child Trends' Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group that reviewed this study for your protection, at 1-855-288-3506 or by e-mail at irbparticipant@childtrends.org.

DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM
VERBAL INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS OF STAFF OF URM PROGRAMS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

We are members of the research team conducting the "Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program." Its purpose is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. The study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees and funds the national URM Program. As part of the study, we are visiting several URM program sites across the country. We are talking with individuals who help implement or operate the programs, as well as individuals who help implement or operate other programs and services accessed by unaccompanied refugee minors in the same communities.

Before beginning our discussion, we want to thank you for agreeing to talk with us today. We know you are busy and we will try to be as focused as possible. The interview will take about 60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and there are no penalties for choosing not to take part in the interview. Although your answers are important to the study, you can refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. Our aim is to learn from your insights and experience, not to audit or judge your agency or programs. You will not benefit personally by participating, however, what we learn from you can help improve the services URM Program provides to youth. Your answers will be kept private to the extent permissible by law. Information you provide will not be shared with other staff at your program or organization. Only the study team will have access to the information you provide through this interview. Your name will not be listed in any published reports, and comments will not be attributed to you. Instead, your information will be combined with information provided by others. However, because of the relatively small number of organizations participating in the study, there is a possibility that a response could be correctly attributed to you. [If a group interview, add: Respecting the privacy of other people in the group is important; please do not talk about anything people say here. We cannot guarantee that others in the group will keep private what is said here.]

If it is alright with you, we would like to record the interview, so we can fill in our notes and make sure we accurately report your thoughts and opinions. If anyone objects to our recording the discussion, please let us know now. You can also ask us to pause the recorder at any time during the interview.

We are very pleased to have you here today, and we thank you for your time and your opinions. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

I.   Background on Respondent and School

To start, I'd like to learn about you and your school, with a specific focus on your work with URMs. *[If necessary, define URM and the URM program for interviewees. If the respondent is familiar with the URM program and URM youth (such as at a small school specifically designed for refugee youth) ask questions 5-9. If not, ask questions 1-4 and skip to question 10.]*

1. Please briefly describe your school, including the programs and services your school provides. **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G*)**

2. What is your official job title? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

3. Please briefly describe your current position and job responsibilities. *[Note to interviewer: Ask for org chart]* **(Asked in Appendices D and G)**

4. What geographic region does this school serve? **(Asked in Appendices D and G*)**

5. Please describe your role working with URM youth. **(Asked in Appendix G)**

6. Tell us about your partnership with [*URM program organization*]. **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    Probe: How long has your school been partnering with [URM program organization]?

    Probe: How/Why did your school begin partnering with [URM program organization]?

7. *[Note to interviewer: Ask funding questions only if the respondent is from a non-traditional school or other non-profit organization]* What are the main sources of funding for your program? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    a. What funding sources do you use to provide services to URM youth? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

8. How many URM youth are enrolled in this school?

    a. Has this changed over time?

        Probe on respondent's familiarity with the URM program and URM populations served by the agency.

9. How would you describe the population of URM youth enrolled at this school? **(Asked in Appendices D* and G*)**

    a. Has this changed over time? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    b. What are the strengths of these youth? **(Asked in Appendix G*)**

        ▪ How do their strengths differ from other youth that you serve? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    c. What are their needs? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

        ▪ How do their needs differ from other youth that you serve? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    d. What challenges do they face? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

        ▪ How do those challenges differ from other youth that you serve? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

  e. How do these strengths, needs, and challenges differ by youth characteristics? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    Probe on pathway into program, immigration status, country of origin, age, ethnicity, language, religion. Note that even if respondent is familiar with the URM Program, they may not have this information.

10. Can you describe the characteristics of refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education at your school?

  a. Has this changed over time?

  b. Ask next questions only if you were not able to ask specifically for URM youth in question 9:

    i) What are the strengths of these youth? What are the needs?

    ii) How do these strengths and needs vary among different groups of youth?

II.   Educational Services Provided to URM Youth

Note to interviewer: If the respondent is familiar with the URM program and URM youth, ask specifically about URM youth. If not, ask about broader groups of youth (refugees, English Language Learners, students with interrupted formal education) whose experiences are likely relevant to or overlapping with those of URM youth. If the respondent is not associated with a school, tailor the question specifically for the services or programs that the respondent's organization provides (e.g., ask how URM youth enroll in their program).

Now I'd like to ask about the services you provide to *[URM youth/students]* and how you connect [*URM youth/students*] with services.

1. Can you please describe the process that occurs when a URM youth/refugees/English Language Learner/student with interrupted formal education is enrolled in your school?

  Probe on assessment of English language ability, grade placement, identification of learning disabilities/IEP, connection to additional services

  a. What are some challenges that arise when enrolling URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/student with interrupted formal education in your school?

2. Can you describe specific accommodations or programs in place to support URM youth/refugees/English Language learners/students with interrupted formal education? (e.g., Newcomer Curriculum, English Language programs, Refugee School Impact Grant programs)

  Probe on structure (e.g., separate Newcomer Academy, pull-out programs, push-in programs, etc.), interpretation services for students who have low English Proficiency, students who arrive with limited formal education and literacy (particularly older youth)

3. How do you determine whether URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education need additional services?

  Probe on whether there are any services specifically targeted to URM populations versus foreign-born populations more generally.

4. *[Note to interviewer: This question may not be relevant for respondents who are not affiliated with schools. Determine beforehand whether this is an appropriate question.]* To what degree are URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education included in mainstream classes?

    a. How does this differ among groups of youth?

    b. How do you determine whether to include URM youth/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education in mainstream classes?

Note to interviewers: Questions about foster parents are specific to respondents who are familiar with URM youth. If not, skip to question 6.

5. Do you interact with foster parents of URM youth, beyond normal contact with parents?

    Probe: What does this interaction look like?

    Probe: Do foster parents need additional support from the school? If so, what?

6. Does your school provide any particular services to youth living independently (URM youth or otherwise)?

    Probe specifically on youth who have left the URM program (if applicable), but allow responses for youth living independently for other reasons.

7. How does your school partner with other service providers to support URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education?

8. To what degree do you feel that your school is able to meet URM youths' educational needs?

    a. What gaps in services exist for URM youth in your school? Gaps in accommodations?

III.   Culturally- and Integration-Related Services

Note to interviewer: If the respondent is familiar with the URM program and URM youth, ask specifically about URM youth. If not, ask about broader groups of youth (refugees, English Language Learners, students with interrupted formal education) whose experiences are likely relevant to or overlapping with those of URM youth. If the respondent is not associated with a school, tailor the question specifically for the services or programs that the respondent's organization provides.

Now I would like to ask some questions about services related to culture and integration for students at your school who are recently arrived in the U.S.

1. How welcoming is the school climate to refugees and other youth who are recently arrived in the United States?

    a. Does the school do anything to welcome students who are recently arrived in the U.S.?

2. How well prepared are teachers and other school staff to serve new refugee/immigrant students?

    a. Is there specific training for ELL teachers for working with newly arrived refugees and immigrants?

    b. Is there specific training for other teachers?

    c. What model is used for the training? *[Note to interviewer: Ask for curricular materials, if available]*

3. What other steps, if any, does your school take to ensure that teachers and staff are prepared to work with URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education… **(Asked in Appendix G*)**

    a. In a culturally competent manner?

    b. Considering potential histories of trauma?

    c. With diverse language needs?

4. In general, what have the experiences of URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education at your school been like?

> *Probe: What kind of problems arise with URM youth /refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education at the school?*

> *Probe: What do you do to help address these problems when they arise?*

> *Probe: Do conflicts arise between different ethnic groups among students?*

> *Probe: How does the school handle it when this occurs?*

> *Probe on bullying, discrimination*

5. In what ways are URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners provided the opportunity to take on leadership roles, such as speaking about their countries and cultures or mentoring more recently arrived youth?

6. What additional programs do URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education have access to at your school?

> *Probe on mentoring, tutoring, afterschool, cultural or language clubs, sports teams and arts:*

>> *Probe on each activity: Please describe the program*

>> *Probe on each activity: Are URM youth /refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education participating?*

>> *Probe on each activity: What factors are facilitating or serving as barriers to their participation?*

7. Do you conduct outreach to or partner with local ethnic communities (e.g., for cultural, language expertise) to help the school prepare for and serve foreign-born youth?

8. Do you make accommodations for different religious beliefs and practices? (e.g., prayer room for Muslim students, holidays, needs around fasting, diet).

IV.   Promising Practices and Challenges

Note to interviewer: If the respondent is familiar with the URM program and URM youth, ask specifically about URM youth. If not, ask about broader groups of youth (refugees, English Language Learners, students with interrupted formal education) whose experiences are likely relevant to or overlapping with those of URM youth. If the respondent is not associated with a school, tailor the question specifically for the services or programs that the respondent's organization provides.

I'd like to learn about promising practices that your school implements in serving [*URM youth/students*], as well as challenges you face in serving these youth.

1. Has your school implemented any practices that you think are promising in supporting URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education to achieve positive educational outcomes?

    a. If so, what are they?

2. In your experience, what are the biggest education challenges facing URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education?

3. How does your school work to address these challenges?

4. What other challenges do URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education face?

V.   Context on local communities

This section will need to be tailored, depending on the type of school/organization. This can be done prior to the interview. Interviewers will only ask these questions for respondents for whom serving immigrants/refugees are central to the mission of their school/organization.

Now I'd like to hear about the local community you serve at your school/organization.

1. Are there communities of refugees (including adults and families) who have been resettled in the area over the past few years? From what countries? Has this changed over time? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

    a. What other immigrant groups are there in the area? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

    b. What are the predominant languages spoken in the area, other than English? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

       Probe on country of origin, ethnicity, language, religion.

    c. How many students from each of these communities have you served in the last year? **(Asked in Appendix G*)**

       Probe: For each of the following, probe on variation between populations

          • *Education levels*

          • *Prevalence of health issues*

          • *Prevalence of mental health issues*

- *Immigration status*

- *Service needs*

- *Family composition (e.g., sibling groups, more/less likely to have family members in the US)*

- *English language ability*

- *Other challenges*

2. What are the challenges facing the immigrant and/or refugee groups in your community? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

3. How would you describe the level of community support for refugees and immigrants in the area? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

VI.   Outcomes

Note to interviewer: If the respondent is familiar with the URM program and URM youth, ask specifically about URM youth. If not, ask about broader groups of youth (refugees, English Language Learners, students with interrupted formal education) whose experiences are likely relevant to or overlapping with those of URM youth. If the respondent is not associated with a school, tailor the question specifically for the services or programs that the respondent's organization provides.

Now I'd like to hear about the goals your school helps URM youth/students achieve and how your school defines success.

1. From your perspective, what are the most important short-term outcomes for URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education who have been students at your school?

2. What are the most important long-term outcomes?

    Probe on high school graduation, connections to GED, connections to vocational training programs, connections to postsecondary education, social integration/development of community, understanding/knowledge of career pathways and how to achieve goals

3. How do you think your school helps youth achieve these goals? **(Asked in Appendix G*)**

4. How do you measure these outcomes?

5. How do you define progress towards these outcomes?

6. How do you measure progress?

VII.   Data

Note to interviewer: These questions will need to be tailored depending on the respondent and their familiarity with the URM program. Ask for data documentation if available. If the respondent is not associated with a school, tailor the question specifically for the services or programs that the respondent's organization provides.

Now I would like to ask about the data your school collects on URM youth/students, especially for specific groups of students.

1. Does your school/district track information specifically on foster youth that is different from general records kept on all youth that are enrolled? On youth who live independently? On URM youth/refugees/English Language Learners/students with interrupted formal education?

    Probe: If so, what data do you currently collect? How frequently do you gather it?

    Probe: Are you able to distinguish foster youth in your data? URM youth? Refugees?

    Probe: What data do you gather on your ELL students?

    a. What systems do you use to maintain and store these data? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, and G)**

    b. Do you record reasons for leaving school? What is the range of reasons that you record?

    c. Do you collect data on youth after they leave school? **(Asked in Appendix G*)**

2. Do you and the local child welfare agency share data?

    Probe: What data do you share with [URM program organization]?

    Probe: What data do they share with you?

    Probe: Do you have a formal data sharing agreement? What does it cover?

3. Do you and [*URM program organization*] share data? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    Probe: What data do you share with [URM program organization]?

    Probe: What data do they share with you?

    Probe: Do you have a formal data sharing agreement? What does it cover?