

CJC Implementation Research Protocol: Student Focus Group

Abt Associates IRB Approval No. XXXX

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Introduction of and Informed Consent for the Study *(read to all respondents)*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this conversation today.

My name is **(insert name here)**, and I'm a researcher from MDRC, located in **(Oakland CA or New York, NY)**. I'm here because Abt Associates and MDRC, on behalf of the United States Department of Labor (DOL), are conducting a five-year study of the Cascades Program.

We are visiting to conduct interviews with Cascades staff, partners, and students to learn what is happening on the ground and what the challenges are of operating this new program. Interviews will cover the organization of the center, as well as its mission and vision, and how it fits within the Job Corps network.

These interviews will provide important information on how the program is working here at Cascades. We will use what we learn from these interviews to contribute to a report about how effective the Cascades program is in serving individuals like you. This report will be submitted to the Department of Labor to inform the federal government about this new model.

Privacy Statement *[Interviewer must read this to all respondents]*

Before beginning the focus group, **I (we)** want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and remind you that your participation is voluntary. **I (we)** know that you are busy and will try to be as brief as possible. We have many questions and are going to talk to many different people, so please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question. You may also refuse to answer any question. The conversation today should last about one hour. We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about the Cascades program. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

You can send comments regarding the time estimate or any other aspect of this interview, including suggestions for reducing the duration, to **(insert contact name and provide address if necessary)**.

In addition, before we start, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during these conversations, information is never repeated with the name of the respondent in any reports or in any discussions with supervisors, colleagues, or anyone from the Department Of Labor. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is presented so that no one person can be identified. There is a small risk of loss of privacy, but we have many procedures in place to ensure your information does not get lost.

To help me accurately report on the information you share, it would help if I could tape record this conversation; of course, I could turn off the recorder at any point if you so desire. I do not have a recorder on now; is it okay with you for me to turn it on?

In order to protect your privacy and the privacy of others, I would like to remind you not to repeat what you hear during this discussion to anyone after you leave this group.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do I have your permission to begin the session?

- This interview protocol is intended for a group of 6-8 students currently enrolled in Cascades. Focus groups can be separated by pathway (healthcare/IT) or other criteria (e.g. age).
- Please use the verbal consent reminder script prior to beginning the session with the students individually.
- Introduce yourself, and ask the students to introduce themselves one at a time.
- Ask permission to tape record sessions.
- Text in italics is background information for the interviewer.
- Please allow 60 minutes for the focus group session.

Center: Center code

Number of students: [enter number]

Ages:

Interviewer: Interviewer last name

Write-up: Last name of person doing write-up

FOCUS GROUP DATE/TIME: Date/Time

1. How did you first learn about Cascades? [Go around the room and have each student say their first name and answer this question.] Describe
2. What made you want to choose Cascades versus someplace else? (Probe: How did staff sell Cascades? What did you like? What did you worry about? Was the environment physically welcoming and conducive to learning?) Describe
3. Thinking back to the marketing brochures/materials, was the way Cascades was described accurately reflected in your experience to date?
4. How are classes here different from regular school? (Probe: Be sure they tell you if they are talking College prep classes (math, reading science) and vocational classes. After students talk if they haven't covered the relationship with staff, ask about it.) Describe
5. In general, what are the relationships like between the students and instructors and counselors at Cascades? Between the students? Describe
6. What is safety like here? [Probe: Is bullying or harassment ever a problem? What happens when there is a dangerous incident at Cascades?] Describe
7. How has Cascades helped you think about your future plans differently and/or changed your attitude toward the future changed? Describe
8. What are the best and worse things about Cascades? Describe
9. How long in total do you expect to stay at Cascades? Describe
10. Why do you think people leave Cascades earlier than they planned to? Have you thought about leaving Cascades earlier than you planned? Describe
11. What are your plans after finishing Cascades? [go around the room and have each student describe their plans.] Describe
12. Do you think Cascades has prepared you for getting a job in [insert industry target, if grouping students by IT or Healthcare] industry? Why or why not? Describe

13. Is there anything else we should know about Cascades? Describe