

Appendix D

Protocol for Staff Interviews/Focus Groups

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your insights are a really important part of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project. The goal of the project is to explore ways that we can apply principles of the behavioral sciences—which uses psychology and economics—to improve your jobs and help better serve families.

We want to hear your thoughts about how the intervention we designed with the county operates, and any ideas you have that might help you do your job better or improve the experience of the program for families. This interview is completely voluntary and private. Your supervisor and clients will not see these responses. The research team working with the County on the project will summarize responses. The research team will never identify an individual nor link any answers back to a specific individual.

[If a focus group] We ask that you not share anything that is said here outside of this group. However, we cannot guarantee that others will not do so.

Please read through and sign the consent form and we can get started. The conversation will be audio-recorded, but you will have the opportunity to tell us if you do not want any comments recorded. You are also welcome to share any comments to any one of us privately. *As is stated in the consent form that I'll be handing out, participation is voluntary and the interview should take about 1 hour of your time.* According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), 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 collection is 0970-0502 and the expiration date is 08/31/2020.

Informed Consent: Staff Interviews

You are invited to participate in an interview for the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project.

What is the study?

MDRC, a nonprofit social policy research organization, and its partner MEF Associates are conducting this project under contract to the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its goal is to use behavioral science, which incorporates psychology and economics, to improve family engagement in the early part of a case with the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF). We have developed a flyer to include with the accept-for-service letter as well as a sequence of text messages for families in the first several weeks of their case, and randomly assigned half of new cases to receive this outreach.

What will I need to do?

We are talking with staff and families who have interacted with our interventions to provide their thoughts and experiences with the flyer and text messages. This interview will take up to 1 hour. The interview focuses on your thoughts, experiences, and feedback on how you and the families on your caseload interacted with the interventions.

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. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. We would like to record the interview to help with our notes. However, if you do not want us to record, we will not. If we do record, you can ask to stop the recording at any time.

Participating in the interview will not benefit you directly, but sharing your thoughts on these interventions may help improve the experiences of families involved in CYF.

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, Rekha Balu at MDRC at 212-340-8616.

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Statement

“I have read this form and agree to be in the study. I know that my participation is voluntary and that MDRC follows strict rules to protect my privacy. I know that I can refuse to answer any questions and that I can stop participating at any point.”

Name of Study Participant (Print)

Signature of Study Participant

Let's start with some background.

- How long have you been a caseworker at CYF? What is your current position?
- What is the size of your current caseload? Does it change much from month to month?
- To what extent do you feel like you have time to connect with each of your cases within the first week? Within the first month?
- Thinking back on the past 2-3 months, do you have a story that you consider a particular success or failure for a client navigating the first 1-2 months of their case? What factors help them succeed? What gets in the way?

We'd like to ask about the intervention flyer and text messages.

- Did families in the intervention group show you/bring you the flyer? How did you use the roadmap on the flyer, if at all?
 - If so, do you think the flyer was helpful to families? Why or why not?
- Did intervention group families discuss the text messages they received? If so, what types of things did they bring up? Did they mention questions and concerns? If so, what are some examples, and how did you handle them?
 - Were there any particular messages from the sequence that families mentioned?
- To what extent did the automated text messages generate an email response from the family to you? What did you think of that contact? [PROMPT IF NEEDED: Was it generally helpful, frustrating, ill-timed, etc.?)
- What did the level of preparation for and participation in the home visit and family conference look like for families who received the intervention messages compared to families who did not receive it? What kinds of differences did you notice? (e.g., initiating or returning phone calls, types of questions asked, etc.)
- What would you do to improve family engagement in the first 60 days of the case planning process?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience or your perception of the case planning process?

Thank you for your time!