

Appendix A

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 ideas from psychology and economics—to improve your jobs and help better serve individuals and 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 ideas from psychology and economics, to improve communication with and participation of individuals who receive services from the Monroe County Department of Social Services (MCDSS). We have developed revised outreach materials for the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program. We have also developed some text messages for clients to remind them about appointments.

What will I need to do?

We are talking with staff and clients who have interacted with our interventions to provide their thoughts on and experiences with the outreach materials and text messages. This interview will take up to 1 hour. The interview focuses on your thoughts and experiences, and gives you an opportunity to provide feedback on how you and the clients 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 individuals involved in MCDSS. We have very strong security measure in place and will make every effort to protect your privacy. There is a small possibility of someone outside of the study staff hearing or seeing your survey responses.

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 and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to complete. Whether or not you choose to participate will not be shared with anyone.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you can call the project director, Peter Baird at MDRC at 212-340-8834.

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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 working at MCDSS/Rochester Works? What is your current position? How long have you been in this position?
- What is the size of your current caseload? Does it change from month to month or by season, say summer versus winter? How many people do you meet with each week?
- To what extent do you feel like you have time to connect with each of your clients and track their progress through the TANF program?
- Do you take any actions if a client misses an appointment?
- 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 system, and achieving or failing to achieve a job outcome? What factors help them succeed? What gets in the way?

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

- Describe your effort and hours involved in working with the new intervention materials and/or in the new presentation at Rochester Works?
 - If you had a role in the intervention materials or presentation, what was it?
 - How did collaboration work within and across your agency and partners? MCDSS, Rochester Works, others?
- Did clients show you/bring you the revised BIAS-NG EA or Work Experience Program letters? Discuss the magnet?
 - If so, do you think the new BIAS-NG materials were helpful to clients? Why or why not?
- Did intervention group individuals 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?

If you are aware of who was in the BIAS-NG intervention group: Did you notice any differences in the level of preparation for or participation in meetings, internships, or TANF generally who received the intervention messages and letters compared to client who did not receive it? What kinds of differences did you notice? (e.g., initiating or returning phone calls, types of questions asked, punctuality to meetings, engagement, duration of participation, etc.)

- Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience or your perception of the case planning process?

For Rochester Works staff:

- Were staff able to handle the new presentation schedule and protocol? What was the impact of the new presentation on staff? In what ways was the presentation and procedures better or worse than the previous presentation and procedures?
- How was the revised Work Experience Program orientation received? Did clients seem to engage differently in the orientation or subsequent meetings? Did the revised orientation change interactions between staff and clients in the internship placement meeting after the presentation? If so, how?
 - Was there more interaction between people at the meeting?
 - What types of questions/concerns/problems were brought up?
 - What types of success stories?
 - Was the meeting generally positive, negative, or very different by day?
 - How did the subsequent internship placements go for those who got the revised Work Experience Program orientation versus for those who got the standard presentation?
- What would you do to improve show up rates for the Work Experience Program internship? What would you do to improve show up rates for the Employment Assessment meetings and Work Experience Program orientation?

Thank you for your time!