

Appendix B

Client Interviews

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this interview. This is an important part of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project. We want to learn about how we can use behavioral science to make your experience with the Monroe County Department of Social Services (MCDSS) better. We want to hear your thoughts about working with your caseworker and your ideas about how to improve the experience for individuals and families.

This interview is completely voluntary and private. Your caseworkers and County staff will not see these responses. The research team working with the County on the project will summarize all responses. The research team will never identify an individual nor link any answers back to a specific individual.

Please read and sign the consent form. Then we can get started. I will record the conversation, but you can tell us if you do not want anything you say repeated. You can also share any comments with us privately.

Your participation is voluntary. The interview will take about an 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: Client 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 about?

MDRC, a nonprofit social policy research organization, and its partner MEF Associates are conducting this project on behalf of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families. Its goal is to use behavioral science, which incorporates ideas from psychology and economics, to improve communication with and engagement for individuals who receive services from the Monroe County Department of Social Services (MCDSS). We developed revised outreach materials for the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program. We also developed some text messages for clients to remind them about appointments.

What will I need to do?

We are talking with individuals who have received the materials from the project and asking them to share their thoughts and experiences from their case. 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 used the flyer, received the text messages, and worked with your caseworker.

Does the interview involve any risk to me?

There are no major risks from participating in the interview. The main risk is feeling uncomfortable discussing your case and/or family. You can choose not to answer any of the questions that make you uncomfortable. 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 the interview help me?

Participating in the interview will not help you directly, although sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the experiences of future individuals and families.

Do I have to do the interview?

You do not have to do the interview if you do not want to. You can stop the interview at any time. Your participation in the interview will have no effect on services you or your family receive from MCDSS or any other organizations. 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.

Will I receive anything for my time?

To express our appreciation for your participation, we will give you a \$25 gift card for participating in the interview.

Will you tell people what I say?

The study team will not share your answers with anyone, unless you say something about hurting yourself or others or if you describe someone else being hurt. Otherwise, only the study team will read the notes or listen to the recording and no one at MCDSS or Rochester Works will hear your answers. We may use some specific quotes but we won't include anyone's name. When the project is over, we will destroy our notes and recordings.

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

We are going to start by asking you some questions about yourself..

- Tell us about yourself—when did you first start receiving services or benefits from the Monroe County Department and Social Services? For what reason?
- Did you receive information from MCDSS about TANF activity or work programs expectations? If yes, do you recall what information you received? Do you recall how you received that information (text, letter, magnet, email, other)?
 - Was it easy to understand? Was anything you didn't understand or found confusing about it? Is there any other information that would've been helpful to know? Did you find the information helpful? Why or why not?
 - What was the most effective way to contact you to inform you about the meeting? (letter, text, other)
- How did staff at MCDSS work with you? What, if anything, did they do that was helpful? What are examples of things they might have done to make the TANF program or your work experience easier or better for you?
- What kinds of communication did you have with MCDSS staff? Was it in-person meetings, phone calls, text messages, or something else?
 - How often did you communicate with staff?
 - Would you have liked communication to be more often, less often, or was it about right? Why?
 - What, if anything, made communication hard?
 - What, if anything, made it easy?
- Tell me about who you turn to when you have questions about TANF or other programs? Who do you ask about services you were referred to? How do you know who to ask?
- How prepared did you feel for the Employment Assessment and subsequent Work Experience Program? What got in the way of feeling prepared? What would have helped you?
- Have you been through the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program multiple times? Or just once? Have you noticed changes over time?
- Do you recall receiving this letter [show treatment or control letter as appropriate]?
- [IF PROGRAM CASE] This magnet? [show] Do you recall receiving these text messages from MCDSS [show]?
- If so, what did you think when you first saw them? How did you react to them?
 - Did you ever look at any letter again, later in the process?
 - How did you track your appointments? Did you put them in a calendar? Put the magnet on your refrigerator or in some other visible place? Use some other way to track them?

- Did you find the [letter / magnet / text message] helpful? Was there other information that would've been helpful to have on the letter? On the magnet? In the text message?
- If you have been through the Work Experience Program or another DSS orientation, how was this meeting different from others you experienced? In what ways?
 - Do you remember any conversations during the orientation? Did you learn anything? Were the conversations helpful or unhelpful? How?
 - Do you remember any testimonials from past TANF participants? Did you learn anything? Were they helpful or unhelpful?
- What actions or information would have helped you understand more about expectations for the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program?
 - Whom would you have liked to receive the information from? A case manager? Different social service staff? Someone from a CBO? A peer? Someone else?
 - What do you think would increase show up rates at these meetings and the internship?
- Do you feel like you achieved important steps, or made progress, towards getting a job?
 - In what ways or why not?
 - What helped you make progress?
 - What else would have helped you make progress towards a job?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience or your perception of the Employment Assessment and Work Experience Program?

Thank you for your time!