

**CJC Implementation Research Protocol:
Student Focus Group**

OMB Control No.1290-0012
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Abt Associates IRB approval No.0917

Persons are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. Respondents' responses are voluntary.

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

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today.

My name is _____, and this is _____ and we are researchers from MDRC. We are here because MDRC and our partners, Abt Associates, are conducting a five-year study of the Cascades Program on behalf of the United States Department of Labor (DOL).

We are visiting to conduct in-person interviews with center staff and partners (such as referral partners and employers) to learn what is happening on the ground and what are the challenges of implementing this new program. Interviews will cover the organizational characteristics of the center, as well as its mission and vision, and how it fits within the Job Corps network.

These interviews will provide important qualitative information on the implementation at Cascades. We will use what we learn from these interviews to contribute to a report about the impacts and implementation of the Cascades program. This report will be submitted to DOL to inform the federal government about this new model.

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

Before beginning the interview, **we** want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and remind you that your participation is voluntary. **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 interview today should last about **60 minutes**. This interview is *not* part of a Job Corps audit or a compliance review. We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about Cascades' implementation. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

In addition, before we start, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during these interviews, information is never repeated with the name of the respondent in any reports or in any discussions with supervisors, colleagues, or anyone from DOL. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is compiled and 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 call; 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? Great, once I turn it on, I am going to ask you to state your name and verbal consent to being recorded.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Start recorder.

Do you agree to participate in the focus group and do we have your permission to record the 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. Please tell us a little about yourself and why you decided to participate in this focus group? [Go around the room and have each student say their first name and answer this question.] Describe

ENROLLMENT

2. How did you all first learn about this center?
3. What made you want to choose this center versus someplace else? (Probe: How did staff sell this center? What did you like? What did you worry about? Is there anything you were concerned about?) Describe
 - a. [Cascades only] If you didn't get assigned to Cascades what would you have done? (Probe: How likely would you have gone to a different Job Corps center? Why, or why not? Which center? Would you have gone to college? Would you have still sought to go into the same trade/pathway?)
4. Thinking back to enrollment, was the way this center was described accurately reflected in your experience to date?
 - a. Do you think they conveyed the expectations on the students accurately?

GOALS AND PLANNING

5. What were your goals before you arrived or when you first arrived at the center?
 - a. What did you want to accomplish? Did you want to get a GED? Did you want to go to college?
 - b. Did you know what trade/pathway you wanted to pursue? Was this an interest before learning about Job Corps?
 - c. Did you plan to stay in Job Corps for the entire length of time you are allowed? If not, how many years did you plan to stay?
 - d. How has this all changed since you have been here?
 - e. How long do you expect to stay at center now? Describe
6. Why do you think people leave this center earlier than they planned to?
 - a. Have you thought about leaving this center earlier than you planned? Why? Describe

7. How has this center helped you think about your future plans differently and/or changed your attitude toward the future? Describe
 - a. Did you feel like you played an active role in creating your academic and career plan?
 - What was that process like? Did the staff actively seek your input?

EDUCATION & TRAINING AND CENTER ENVIRONMENT

8. How are classes here different from regular school? (Probe: Be sure they tell you if they are talking about College prep classes (math, reading science) and vocational classes.
 - a. What do you think about the expectations on the students here?
 - Are they different (higher or lower) than your experience at a regular school?
9. What do you think about the quality of instructors at this center? Is it higher or lower than you expected? How so? (Probe: Are instructors approachable? Knowledgeable? Available?)
10. What do you think about the quality of vocational, or technical training, classes? (Probe: Is the amount of hands-on training meeting your needs? Does instruction accommodate your needs in general? Are the classes engaging?)
11. In general, how does the environment here at this center make you feel? (What is it about the environment?) Is it positive? Is it relaxing?
 - a. Do you think this makes a difference in how well you do here (Is it welcoming and conducive to learning)?
12. In general, what are the relationships like between the students and staff at this center? Specifically, the instructors? The counselors?
 - a. Are you close to any of the staff? Have the staff motivated you? Do you think the staff have been instrumental in how well you are doing here?
 - b. Has there been staff turnover that has affected your experience at the center? (Probe: Has it affected your ability to form meaningful relationships with your instructors? With counselors? With dorm staff?)

13. What are the relationships like between the students? Do you feel supported by each other? Describe

BEST/WORST

14. What are the best and worst things about this center? Describe
 - a. [Facilitator note: Steer responses away from rules about leaving campus. Rather, ask the students if they feel like the students are given more responsibility in other ways]

FUTURE PLANS

15. What are your plans after finishing or leaving this center? [go around the room and have each student describe their plans.] Describe
16. Do you think this center has prepared you for getting a job in your target industry? Why or why not? Describe
- a. Do you think you received the credentials necessary for the position you want to pursue? Or credentials that could put you on a path to the career you want?
 - b. Do you think Job Corps prepared you for work? How?
 - c. Other than academic services (Trade, college, high school or GED classes) did you take any classes about or receive any guidance about other things such as life skills or how to find a job? Such as help with a resume and practice interviewing?

WRAP UP

17. Is there anything else that you want to share about the center or about your experience here? Describe