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Child Welfare Information Gateway Needs Assessment Focus Group Guide

There are two sections of this guide: 1) Facilitator Guidelines and Introductions and 2) Questions. This guide is designed for 1-2 facilitators that will conduct 90 minute in-person or virtual focus groups of 10-12 participants. If needed to accommodate, this guide can also be adapted for individual interviews

Facilitator Guidelines and Introductions

Introduce leaders of the focus group and roles of each in supporting the meeting. Then explain the following to participants:

- *We are conducting focus groups with child welfare professionals to better understand what information would be most useful to those serving children and families and how we can better get that information to you. Your participation is voluntary and information will be kept private. Any input gathered will not be attributed to you individually, but will be combined with others for a fuller picture of the issues. We are recording the session to be sure our notes are accurate, but again, we will not connect any names to any comments. Please let me know if there are any concerns about this process.*
- *Let's do brief introductions, please give us your 1) name 2) what you do and 3) let us know if have you heard of the Child Welfare Information Gateway (e.g., ordered a publication, contacted an information specialist, used an electronic listserv or subscription service, spoke to CWIG staff or obtained CWIG publication at a conference, etc.)?*

Briefly synthesize the bullet points below and adjust detail according to responses during introductions. This is an overview of the foundation and parameters for what Information Gateway can do to help them improve their services and improve outcomes for the children and families they serve.

- Describe our mission to serve as the connection to the best information that protects children and strengthens families. Explain we are a service of the Children's Bureau, ACF, US. DHHS.
- Briefly describe our topical scope and gateway concept.
- Emphasize that Information Gateway provides information services (not direct services), and that our information is generally at the national or state level. We do not advocate for policies. Annually, Information Gateway receives over 4 million visitors to its website, processes over 100,000 print orders, responds to over 4,000 phone calls and emails, manages a library of over 60,000 items, writes or updates over 50 products each year and exhibits at more than 50 conferences.
- Mention that almost all services and products are free.

Questions

Note for facilitator: *Italicized questions are to be used as optional probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses.*

1. What are the biggest challenges for your work in the next year? In the next 5 years?
 - o Optional probe: Are there challenges with high caseload, burnout, supervision, etc.?*
2. What information resources are available to help you prepare for these challenges? What resources are you missing?
3. What programs, practices, or casework approaches would you like to get more information about?
 - o Optional probe: What information do you need related to primary prevention?*
 - o Optional probe: What information do you need related to reducing trauma in the types of services or interventions that are used in child welfare?*
 - o Optional probe: What information do you need related to prioritizing families in service provision?*
 - o Optional probe: What information do you need related to promoting community collaboration in serving children and families?*
 - o Optional probe: What information do you need related to workforce issues?*
4. For the next set of questions, we want to get a better understanding of informal or formal processes your agency may have related to how information resources are accessed and used. Given the types of information resources that you would like more information about, how would you go about looking for this information?
 - o Optional probe: What types of information do you typically ask your supervisor about?*
 - o Optional probe: What types of information do you search for yourself?*
 - o Optional probe: What types of information do you typically ask colleagues about?*
5. When you find information resources that you want to use in your work, what is your process for taking that next step to use the information?
 - o Optional probe: When you read about a certain practice or intervention that looks promising, what do you typically do with this information?*
 - o Optional probe: Do you need to talk with your supervisor first?*
 - o Optional probe: Does your agency has a formal or informal process for how to handle these situations?*

6. How do you prefer to receive information or new knowledge that will inform your work (e-mail, in-person discussions, phone calls, documents, etc.)?
7. What type of information do you typically share with community service providers?
 - o Optional Probe: What are the high priority topics?*
 - o Optional Probe: How do you prioritize the information that you share with community service providers?*
8. When you share information with community service providers, what format do they typically prefer? (e.g. website links, e-mail attachments, summarizing information)?
 - o Optional Probe: What communication methods do you typically use to share information with community service providers? (e.g. e-mail, in-person supervision) How often does this happen?*
9. How do the community service providers typically use the information that you provide to them?
10. How important is it for you to get information about Federal policies or guidance? (e.g. from the Children's Bureau)
 - o Optional Probe: What are some of the Federal policies or guidance that have been important for your work?*
 - o Optional probe: How do you typically hear about changes in existing federal policy or new policies?*
 - o Optional probe: How do you typically receive guidance about implementing changes in existing federal policy or new policies?*
 - o Optional probe: What sources of information do you currently rely on the most for receiving, interpreting, and implementing guidance from the Children's Bureau?*
 - o Optional probe: What information support do you need so you can interpret and apply federal policies in your work?*
11. What else would you like to share with us about your information needs? About Child Welfare Information Gateway?