

Attachment 8: Sample Qualitative Instrument (Focus Group Guide)

DASH 1308-Strategy 4 Project: School Staff Focus Group on School Climate

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**DASH 1308-Strategy 4 Project: School Climate Index Interview Guide – School Staff Guide**

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## **School Climate Index Interview Guide – School Staff Guide**

This interview guide will be used for semi-structured individual or group interviews with school staff, including teachers, sports coaches and other staff. Four staff will be interviewed at each school. The interviews will take place in a small group or individually, depending on the availability of staff and scheduling.

**DOMAINS TO BE COVERED:** The school staff interview guide will be used to assess Domain 1b: School Level Policy; Domain 2: Practice; Domain 3: Programs; and Domain 4: School Level Professional Development

### **INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS:**

These interviews will be conducted with up to four school staff members (one social studies or other core subject teacher, one physical education teacher, a school counselor and a school nurse). If possible, the interview will be conducted in a group to allow diverse perspectives to be captured. If scheduling does not permit a group interview, the interviews will be conducted one-on-one.

### **INTERVIEW LENGTH:**

The interview is designed to last one hour to 90 minutes if done in a group; if done individually, the individual interviews will last no more than 1 hour.

## SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

### SUGGESTED INTERVIEW TIME: 1 TO 1.5 HOURS, DEPENDING ON SIZE OF GROUP

**Interviewer instructions:** *If this is the first part of the interview, review the consent statement and ask for permission to record prior to proceeding. If there are one or more new interviewees, review the consent statement before proceeding.*

*The subquestions are designated as “primary” and “secondary” The secondary questions should be asked if time permits.*

### DOMAIN 1: POLICY:

In this part of the interview, we'll ask about how you and other school staff implement or enforce policy that affects safe and supportive school environment for LGBTQ youth at the school as part of your current positions. We are not here to judge your school, but rather to understand how you work in this area and the challenges and successes that you have experienced.

Please answer to the best of your ability, and feel free to ask questions at any time.

**Note to interviewer:** *At the beginning of the interview, share the list of policies provided by the district and confirm that the school administrators are aware of the policies. If no documents were provided, begin the interview with the following:*

*“To start with, please give me a short description of the policies your district has that support a safe and supportive school environment for LGBTQ students.”*

1. What is your role in addressing these policies with students at your school?

*Note to interviewers: Allow the respondents to describe how they are involved in addressing policy with students and use the subquestions below to fill in any gaps in information.*

### PRIMARY QUESTIONS

1. How do you share information about or communicate these policies to students?

2. What is your role in enforcing these policies?

3. Are you familiar with the process for responding to policy violations?

- How comfortable are you with the process? *(Probe for staff knowledge of specific process and steps)*

## SECONDARY QUESTIONS

1. If you have had to deal with a violation of any of these policies, can you describe what happened, and how you responded, leaving out any names or information that would allow for identifying those involved?
2. What kind of support does the school administration provide to you to help you deal with incidents pertaining to these policies?
3. How do you feel that the policy contributes to safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ students? Please give specific examples if you can think of any.
4. How have the policies changed the environment at your school for LGBTQ youth?
  - Are you ever asked to give feedback about how the policies are helpful in maintaining a safe and supportive environment, or how they are not helpful? If yes, please describe.
  - Where do you feel the policies could be strengthened?
5. What are the biggest successes and challenges that you feel these policies have presented?

## DOMAIN 2: PRACTICE

In this part of the interview, we'll ask about the extent to which your school has adopted and implemented practices supportive of LGBTQ students in order to shape a culture of inclusion and respect, and how you, as staff working directly with students, carry out these practices. For example, we are interested in any actions taken to welcome LGBTQ youth to school events such as dances, sports teams, and other activities that take place at the school. We realize that some of these questions may be about areas where specific actions are not being taken, or are in the planning phase.

**Note to interviewer:** *The questions are divided into **primary** and **secondary** sections. Ask the primary questions for each area, and go back to ask the secondary questions if time permits after the primary questions have been covered for each area.*

### PRIMARY QUESTION:

1. Are school staff members encouraged to practice gender-inclusive language? (i.e., using the term “significant other”, “person you are dating” rather than “husband/wife”, “girlfriend/boyfriend” etc.?)
  - Do you think gender-inclusive language is a general practice at your school?

### SECONDARY QUESTION:

1. If a student requests to be referred to as a different gender, or to be called a name that is not consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth, how does the school handle this request?

## AREA: EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

## **PRIMARY QUESTIONS**

1. Please describe any ways that your school tries to ensure that school events are inclusive and safe for LGBTQ students.

- Can same-sex couples attend school dances as a couple?
- If a group of students is planning an event or dance, can posters advertising the dance show same gender and opposite gender couples?

2. Does your school do anything special to ensure that physical education classes and sports programs are welcoming and safe for LGBTQ youth?

- If a student is not comfortable wearing the required uniform, can they wear clothing in which they are comfortable for physical education class or sports programs?

3. Does your school have a diversity and/or cultural education program? If so, please describe it.

- How are LGBTQ people included in the program?

4. Does your school have a Safe Zone program, or another school-wide program, in which trained staff display posters or stickers indicating that they are a trained resource-person for LGBTQ students and that their office or classroom is a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ students?

- If yes, how are staff informed of the opportunity to be trained to participate in the program?
- How is the meaning of the signs communicated to students?

## **SECONDARY QUESTIONS:**

1. Are there any events where staff who are in same sex couples are permitted to bring their partners or spouses?

2. Do you think that staff at your school are made to feel welcome in bringing their partners or spouses to school events, regardless of whether they are in a same sex or opposite sex relationship?

3. Is a variety of physical education activities offered and advertised as welcoming to all students?

- Are physical education activities offered that accommodate a variety of body types and levels of physical contact? (i.e., volleyball as well as football)
- To what extent are co-ed sports opportunities offered?

## **AREA: SCHOOL SERVICES**

### **PRIMARY QUESTIONS:**

1. What efforts, if any, has your school made to include resources for LGBTQ youth in referral lists and resource guides for students and staff? If community agencies provide services on campus, are LGBTQ-serving agencies included?

2. Are there health resources—including mental health services—available that specifically address the needs of LGBTQ students?

**SECONDARY QUESTIONS:**

1. Does your school do anything special to ensure that health services and other student services are welcoming and inclusive for LGBTQ students?

- Do advertisements for services explicitly state that LGBTQ youth are included?

**DOMAIN 3: PROGRAMS**

In this part of the interview we'll ask about the extent to which your school offers programs that specifically support and encourage the growth and development of LGBTQ students.

Please answer to the best of your ability, and feel free to ask questions at any time.

**If the school has a GSA: (If the school does not have a GSA, skip to question 2)**

1. Does your school have a GSA, support group or other safe space group for LGBTQ youth?

- If yes, please tell us about these programs and the students that attend:
  - o Do you know how long the group has existed?
  - o Does the group take place during school hours or after school?
  - o Is the group well-attended? About how many students are active in the group?  
*Probe: What is the makeup of the group in regards to gender, grade, etc.*
  - o Is the group well-respected by the rest of the student body?
  - o Who is the staff adviser to the GSA? Are you aware of any challenges finding or retaining a staff adviser for the group? If yes, please tell us about them.

**If the school does not have a GSA:**

2. If your school does not have a GSA, do you think that the school should start one or restart one? Why or why not?

3. What other activities occur in your school that are tailored to LGBTQ youth? For example, if your school has a peer education program, is any part of it focused on LGBTQ students or is there a specific effort to assure that some of the students selected as peer educators identify as LGBTQ?

## DOMAIN 4B: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this section of the interview, we will ask about your participation in professional development activities focused on meeting the needs of LGBTQ students and promoting a safe and supportive school environment. This would include professional development activities provided or required by the district, at your school, or that you have pursued on your own. For this discussion, professional development can include training sessions, in-service, webinars, online training modules, resources provided on a website, and other types of professional development that you may describe.

Please answer to the best of your ability, and feel free to ask questions at any time.

1. What kind of professional development activities have you attended since coming to work at this school (or at another school in the district) that provided information relevant to working with LGBTQ students?

- Were these activities provided by the district, by your school, or did you pursue them on your own?
  - Did you receive release time to attend the professional development activities?

2. What kinds of professional development opportunities would you like to see in the area of responding to the needs of LGBTQ students? (*Probe for details as needed*).

## V. CONCLUSION

That was the last of my questions. Is there anything else you want to say about the ways in which your school creates a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ students that was not already addressed during the interview?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. You have provided a lot of valuable information that will help us get a fuller picture of the climate in your district/school.

The Hetrick Martin Institute has compiled a list of resources related to this topic that may be of interest. (Provide a copy if respondent desires it.)