

Attachment 7: Focus Group Protocol

Purpose. The purpose of a focus group is to conduct a small-group discussion guided by a trained leader to learn about opinions on a designated topic and to guide future action. Participants are actively encouraged to express their own opinions and respond to others' questions and comments. Responses in a focus group are typically open-ended and relatively broad, but they also have depth, nuance, and variety. Nonverbal communications and group interactions can also be observed. Importantly, focus groups can yield a lot of information in a relatively short period of time.

This study will use the focus group approach to contextualize findings obtained from a multi-mode survey (i.e., web and mail) on the availability and use of emergency supply kits among disaster-affected populations. The focus groups will be used to bring out insights and understandings that data from the survey may not offer.

Target Subject Population. The subject population will be the same as the population from which survey participants are recruited. This includes adults for whom their home address is within the geographic area that was surveyed following a recent natural disaster in the continental United States (e.g., winter storm, flood, tornado, hurricane, wildfire, earthquake). The inclusion criteria for participants are being an English-speaking, non-institutionalized adult, 18 years of age or older. English-speaking is required because of lack of translation ability within current resources (e.g., Research Triangle Institute (RTI) focus group lead, CDC staff for qualitative data analysis). However, English does not need to be primary language. Exclusion criteria include individuals who had a home address in the geographic area but were not physically present at the time of the disaster.

Recruitment. Research Triangle Institute (RTI) aims to recruit participants for up to two focus groups per disaster site for a total of four focus groups (e.g., two focus groups in an area surveyed after a hurricane, two focus groups in an area surveyed after a wildfire). Potential participants will be recruited using social media, bulletin boards, and Craigslist in the geographic areas where the surveys are conducted. (See Attachment 7A). Recruitment will occur two to three weeks prior to each focus group date to allow time for gathering consent as well. Potential participants will be asked to supply their email address and/or phone number during recruitment. An RTI qualitative researcher with CITI training, will next contact potential participants via email and/or phone with the goal of recruiting a sample of eight to twelve demographically diverse participants per group.

Setting. The focus groups will be conducted via videoconference using a focus group vendor. These vendors have user-friendly platforms that allow real-time, back and forth conversations between the moderator and participants without travel, time, or costs associated with in-person meetings. Each focus group will be secure and private to mitigate informational risk. To ensure that participants include individuals from vulnerable populations who may not have access to computer/internet/webcam equipment at home (e.g., low SES; older adults with chronic diseases), two potential accommodations allowing required COVID precautions, such as wearing masks, hygiene practices, and social distancing, may be made available by RTI: 1) reserving

a private meeting room and appropriate equipment for the participant in the area's local health department (i.e., the focus group would still be moderated online by study staff); 2) reserving a private meeting room for the participant in another facility in the area (e.g., library). Local and state COVID-19 ordinances and health orders will be followed in these situations.

Duration. Each focus group will be one and a half to two hours in duration.

Consent. Consent will be obtained during the week before a scheduled focus group via email. The focus group task lead will email a consent form to each potential participant and request that they read, sign, and return the consent form via email. Electronic signatures will be acceptable if the participant does not have equipment to print and send back the form. The consent form includes a description of the study purpose, study procedures, benefits and risks, confidentiality, compensation, and study contacts (See Attachment 7B).

Data Collection. During the focus group, participants will be asked to voluntarily state their age, sex, and race/ethnicity. Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Attachment 7D is the guide that will be used during the focus group sessions.

Confidentiality. To protect the identities of respondents, the moderator will redact all potentially identifying information from transcripts. If it is necessary to identify participants in reports, they will be identified using unique codes (e.g., "Participant 1"). Participants will be notified of recording and the protection of their identities during the consent process and at the beginning of the focus group discussion. They will be asked not to use their last names during discussion and will be reminded that the information discussed during the focus group needs to remain confidential. After each focus group, recordings will be secured using password-protected files in a locked area for which only the moderator and RTI Project Director will have access. Recordings will be destroyed after transcripts are delivered to CDC.

This research is covered by a Certificate of Confidentiality from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The researchers with this Certificate may not disclose or use information, documents, or biospecimens that may identify you in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other action, suit, or proceeding, or be used as evidence, for example, if there is a court subpoena, unless you have consented for this use. Information, documents, or biospecimens protected by this Certificate cannot be disclosed to anyone else who is not connected with the research except, if there is a federal, state, or local law that requires disclosure (such as to report child abuse or communicable diseases but not for federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings, see below); if you have consented to the disclosure, including for your medical treatment; or if it is used for other scientific research, as allowed by federal regulations protecting research subjects.

Benefits and Risks. Each participant will receive compensation of \$40 for attending a focus group. There are no known physical risks to participation outside of those that occur in everyday life. However, some participants may find sharing their recent experience with a natural disaster to be sensitive. It is possible that the discussion may elicit an emotional response. To manage this possibility, the moderator will have a crisis hotline number available

to participants in case an emotional response occurs.