

# Instrument 4: Focus Group Guide for Youth

## **Consent Script for Focus Groups**

This form answers a number of questions you may have about the focus group in which you have been invited to participate. After we review this information, you can decide if you still want to participate in the focus group.

- **Who is doing the focus group and why?**  
The focus group is being led by researchers from the Urban Institute and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago as part of a study of the Family Unification Program or FUP. The study is being conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, agencies in the federal government. The purpose of the focus group is to learn more about the experiences of young people who are participating in FUP. We are speaking with you because you currently have a lease on a home that you obtained using a FUP voucher.
- **What will you be asked to do?**  
You will be asked to take part in a discussion about your experiences in FUP and share your ideas about the program. The discussion will last no more than 90 minutes.
- **Will the focus group be recorded?**  
We would like to audio record the focus group so that we have an accurate record of what is said. However, we will not audio record the focus group if any focus group participant objects to being recorded. One of the researchers will be taking detailed notes, but those notes will not include your name.
- **How will the information that is shared during the focus groups be used?**  
We will combine what you tell us about your experiences with FUP with what youth in 7 other locations tell us and share the results with ACF. ACF will use this information to improve administration of the program.
- **Will anyone know what you say during the focus group?**  
Although we will share the ideas that are discussed during the focus groups with ACF, we won't share your name or other information that could be used to identify you. Additionally, we will not allow anyone outside the research team to listen to the audio recordings of the focus group. The focus group involves a group discussion and we cannot guarantee that focus group participants won't share what is said. However, the researchers will make it clear that it is important to respect everyone's privacy by not sharing what is said outside of the focus group.
- **Are there any exceptions when your name would be shared?**

We are required by law to notify the authorities if you tell us that you intend to harm yourself or someone else.

- **Could you be harmed by participating in the focus group?**  
You may feel uncomfortable sharing your experiences or ideas with the group. However, you can always choose not to take part in the discussion.
- **Could you benefit from participating in the focus group?**  
It is unlikely that you will benefit directly from participating in the focus group, although some young people appreciate the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas with a group of their peers.
- **Will you receive money if you participate in the focus group?**  
You will receive a \$25 gift card as a thank you. You will still receive the \$25 gift card even if you choose not to take part in some or all of the discussion.
- **Can you refuse to participate in the focus group?**  
Yes. Your participation in the focus group is voluntary and will in no way affect your participation in the FUP program or any services you are eligible to receive.
- **Who can you call if you have any questions about the study?**  
If you have any questions about the study you can call:

Mike Pergamit  
Urban Institute  
202-261-5276  
[mpergamit@urban.org](mailto:mpergamit@urban.org)

Mark Courtney  
University of Chicago  
773-702-1219  
[markc@uchicago.edu](mailto:markc@uchicago.edu)

- **What can you do if you participate in the study and you feel you have been treated unfairly or been harmed?**  
If you feel you have been harmed or were treated unfairly, you may contact:

Everett Madden, Institutional Review Board Coordinator  
Urban Institute  
2100 M Street NW  
Washington DC 20037  
Phone: 202-261-5632

SSA-Chapin Hall IRB Coordinator  
University of Chicago School of Social Services Administration  
969 E. 60<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
Phone: 773-834-0402

- **Do you have any questions about the focus group?**
- **Do you agree to participate in the focus group?**

*The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Family Unification Program. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. 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 and expiration date for this collection are OMB #: 0970-XXXX, Exp: XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments*

**YOUTH CONSENT FORM**  
**Acknowledgment of Voluntary Participation and Audio Recording**

A team of researchers from the Urban Institute and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago is working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to learn about how the Family Unification Program (FUP) in [SITE]] works. Each of you has been invited to this group because you have received a FUP voucher.

Before we get started, there are several important things for you to understand:

- Everyone who works on this study has signed a privacy pledge requiring them not to tell anyone outside the research staff anything you say during this focus group. Only the people doing the research will see any information that identifies you personally. In addition, the transcription service workers have also signed pledges of privacy and will only hear audio recordings of focus groups to transcribe them. That said, we cannot control what focus group participants say outside the group, so there is some chance that sensitive information could be shared with others. We ask that you do not share what we discuss here today to maintain everyone's privacy.
- Your participation is completely **voluntary**. That means you may choose to skip any questions you wish or refuse to participate at any time. There are no known risks to you for taking part in this study. Participating or choosing not to participate in this research will have no effect on your participation in the program or any services you are eligible to receive.
- With your permission, the discussion will be **recorded**.
- The discussion will last about **90 minutes**.
- You will receive a \$25 gift card as a thank you.
- Researchers are required to take steps, including reporting to authorities, a situation where they believe someone they speak to may harm themselves or others.

If you have any questions about the study, you may call Michael Pergamit at the Urban Institute, 202-261-5276.

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**Respondent Name (please print)**

**I agree to participate in this research.**

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Signature

Date

**I agree to have this focus group recorded.**

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Signature

Date

## Youth Focus Group Guide

We are meeting with you all today to learn about your experiences with the Family Unification Program, also known as FUP, which provides housing vouchers and other services to youth who were in foster care.

Does anyone have questions before we continue?

[If all consented to recording] I am going to turn on the tape recorder now, and we can get started.

### **Let's start by going around the room and having each of you tell us:**

- Where are you currently living?
- Who, if anyone, are you currently living with?

### **Moving forward, feel free to jump in when you have something to say, but try not to talk over each other.**

### **Now let's talk about the neighborhoods you are currently living in.**

- How would you describe the neighborhood you currently live in?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *Is it mainly apartment buildings, single-family homes or some of each?*
  - o *What are your neighbors like?*
  - o *What do you like most/least about living in your neighborhood?*
  - o *How safe do you feel living here? Why?*
- Do the people you rely on for support live near you?

### **Now let's talk about where you lived before you received your FUP voucher.**

- What can you tell me about your living situation right before you received your FUP voucher?
- *PROBES*
  - o *How long had you been living there?*
  - o *Who else was living with you?*
- Were you in foster care or were you on your own?  
(If any on their own)
  - o What was your living situation like while you were on your own?
    - *PROBES:*
      - *How long were you on your own?*
      - *How many times did you move since you left care?*
      - *Did you spend any time in homeless shelter, on the street or couch-surfing?*

### **Now we'd like to hear about your experiences with FUP.**

- How did you find out about FUP?
- What the application process was like?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *What help, if any, did you receive filling out the application?*

- o What happened at the orientation you were required to attend before you received your voucher?*

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY ONLY APPLY TO YOUTH WITH TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS.

**Now let's talk about your experiences trying to find a place to live.**

- How did you find a place to live using your FUP voucher?
- What, if any, challenges did you encounter while you were trying to find a place to live using your FUP voucher?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *Did you have any trouble finding a landlord who would accept the voucher?*
  - o *Did you have any trouble finding a place you could afford in an area where you wanted to live?*
  - o *If you are a parent, did you have trouble finding a place that would be good for your children?*
  - o *Did you have trouble filling out a housing application (or paying the application fee)?*
- What kind of help, if any, did you receive while you were trying to find a place to live using your FUP voucher?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *Landlords/property lists*
  - o *Neighborhood tours/apartment viewings*
  - o *Advocacy with landlords*
  - o *Help with applications/understanding leases;*
- What, if any, help did you receive with moving in or setting up your household?
- *PROBE: Help paying move-in expenses*
- Who provide the help that you received? [*PHA, PCWA, referral partner, service partner*]

**Now let's talk about your experiences after you moved in.**

- What, if any, challenges have you encountered since you moved in?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *Have you had any problems with your landlords or with your neighbors?*
  - o *Have you struggled to pay your rent on time each month?*
  - o *Has it been difficult for you to pay your utility, cell phone or other bills each month?*
  - o *Have you not been able to afford food or medical care for yourself (or your children)?*

**FUP may provide you with other types of help besides help with housing. Let's talk about other types of help you might have received from FUP.**

- What kinds of things have you received help with from the Family Unification Program besides housing?
- *PROBES:*
  - o *Help with credit problems/money management*
  - o *Lease compliance*
  - o *Job search*
  - o *Educational support*
  - o *Domestic violence situation*
  - o *Substance abuse or mental health treatment*
  - o *Parenting skills;*
  - o *Obtaining benefits/childcare*

- o *Legal issues*
- o *Accessing healthcare*
- o *Cash assistance for essential expenses*
- Who provided these services? [*PHA, PCWA, referral partner, service partner*]
- How helpful were these services?

**Some youth with FUP vouchers participate in what is called the Family Self Sufficiency program, also called FSS. Let's talk about your experiences with that program.**

- Did you participate or are you currently participating in FSS?
- What can you tell me about the program or its purpose?
- What did the program require you to do?
- Did you find the program helpful?
- What do you like/dislike about the program?

**Now we'd like to hear your thoughts on how the FUP has affected you.**

- Do you still meet with someone from [PCWA name] or any other organization on a regular basis?
  - o Who do you meet with?
  - o What do these individuals help you with?
- How has having a FUP voucher affected your life (or your children's lives)?
- **PROBES:**
  - o *Less financial stress?*
  - o *More stability?*
- Where do you think you'd be living now if you hadn't received a FUP voucher?
- What, if anything, would you change about FUP? Why?

**Youth Information**

**Before we wrap up, we'd like to know a few things about you.**

- Are any of you working for pay now?

**For those answering yes:**

- o What kind of work/job do you have?
- o How long have you done that?

**For those answering no:**

- o What are the reasons you aren't currently working?
- o Are you currently looking for work?
- Are any of you currently going to school?
- How far did you get/have you gotten in school?

**Closing**

**Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.**

- Is there anything else you want to tell us about any of the topics we've discussed?
- Do you have any questions about the study?