Instrument 6: Focus Group Guide for Public Child Welfare Agency Caseworkers, Referring Partners, and Service Provider Partners

Before we begin, I want to tell you a few things about this study and your participation in it. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have. We will also email you a copy of this information.

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) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to learn about how communities are using the Family Unification Program (FUP) to serve youth. We are not evaluating your agency or its programs. The information we gather will be used to inform efforts by ACF and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to improve the administration of the program.

As part of this process, we are talking with representatives from public housing agencies that received FUP vouchers in 2018, along with their child welfare agency, Continuum of Care, and service and referring agency partners, to learn more about their FUP services for youth.

We will ask you some questions about the [PHA name] FUP program, including questions about your collaboration with community partners, ways in which serving youth may differ from serving families, and successes or challenges you may have encountered serving youth, along with lessons learned.

A pair of researchers will conduct the discussion, which will take about 90 minutes. We may contact you after the focus group to ask for clarification. Your participation in this discussion is voluntary.

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. The researchers on this study will keep your identity private to the extent permitted by law. 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 you 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.

With your permission, we will 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 does not want it to be recorded. One of the researchers will be taking detailed notes, but will not include your name.

We will share what we learn about your Family Unification Program with ACF as part of our evaluation activities.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY OR TODAY'S DISCUSSION?

MAY WE PROCEED WITH THE DISCUSSION OF YOUR FUP PROGRAM?

If you have questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

Michael Pergamit	Mark Courtney
Urban Institute	Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
202-261-5276	773.702.1219
mpergamit@urban.org	markc@uchicago.edu

If you feel that your rights have been violated or that you have not been treated fairly, contact:

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

Front-Line Staff Focus Group Guide

We are meeting with you all today to learn about your experiences with the Family Unification Program as it is used with youth. Although the program also serves families, we want to focus on your experiences with youth during our conversation today.

We are interested in your partnership with [PHA name] to administer FUP vouchers. [If not child welfare staff] Further, we are interested in the role of [PCWA name] in the partnership on FUP [if not CoC staff] and any interaction you may have with [CoC lead organization].

Does anyone have questions before we continue?

Do you all consent to be recorded?

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

Background
Let's start off by talking about your roles in the FUP program. Please take turns answering the following questions.
- What is your role at this [agency/organization] (e.g. investigative worker, case-carrying caseworker) or organization (e.g. public health nurse, case manager)?
- How many youth with FUP vouchers are you currently working with?
- Do you also serve families receiving FUP?

Moving forward, please feel free to jump in if you have something to say.

[Ask the following if a referring organization]
Identification and Referral
Now we'd like to hear about your role in referring youth to FUP.
- How long have you been referring youth for FUP vouchers?
- How many youth have you referred for FUP vouchers?
- How do you go about identifying and referring youth to FUP?
    - Do you use an assessment tool? If yes: How do you use it to identify eligible youth?
    - Do you use a referral form? If yes: What information is collected on the form? (*If not the PCWA referral form, obtain a copy of the referral form.)*
    - Who at [PCWA name] do you direct referrals to?
- [If child welfare caseworkers, and if youth can stay in care past age 18] How, if at all, does the availability of extended foster care affect how you approach referring youth to FUP?
    - *o* How are you prioritizing which youth to refer?
        - Probe: Do you prioritize highest-need homeless youth?
    - Are you encouraging youth over age 18 to stay in care rather than obtain a FUP voucher? Why or why not?
- What are some of the biggest challenges with identifying eligible youth?
    - How clear are the eligibility guidelines from [PCWA name]? Can you tell me what the eligibility criteria are?
    - What training or instructions were provided to help you understand the eligibility criteria? How was it provided?

- Do you think the eligibility guidelines identify the right youth for the program? Why?
    - o Were there youth who would have benefited from the program but were not eligible? What made them ineligible?
    - o If you could, would you change the eligibility guidelines? How? Why?
- How clear are [PHA name]'s eligibility and application guidelines for FUP for youth?
    - o Do you screen for Housing Choice Voucher eligibility before referring youth to [PCWA name]?

Voucher Issuance, Housing Search and Lease Up
Next, please tell us about your role as youth acquire vouchers and lease up.

- Do you provide help to FUP youth through the housing application process?
    - *o* Probe: provide help with housing application, getting documents, transportation to housing agency, paying off money owed to the housing agency, or interacting with the housing agency?
    - o How, if at all, does [PHA name] help with the application process? [If not PCWA workers] What about [PCWA name]? What about other service providers?
    - o Do youth have difficulty with the application process? Please explain.
    - o [If also serve families] How does this compare to what you provide to families?
- Do you help during the housing search process? If so, how?
    - o Probe: provide a list of other organizations that can help youth find units, conduct neighborhood tours, unit viewings, provide landlord introductions/assurances to landlord
    - o [If provide help in housing search] Do you focus on particular neighborhoods? Why?
    - o [If also serve families] How does this compare to what you provide to families?
    - o [If not PCWA workers] Do [PCWA name] staff help during the housing search process? Do PHA staff help during the housing search process? What about other service providers? If so, how?
    - o [If also serve families] How do the housing needs of youth differ from those of families? How do those needs affect the housing search?
- [If site has project-based and tenant-based vouchers for youth] What types of housing are available for FUP voucher recipients? Is it project-based or tenant-based? Can they choose?
    - o What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of housing?
    - o (If youth get a choice) Do you advise the youth on making a choice?
    - o Are there differences in the housing search process for youth that move into scattered site versus single site housing?
- What, if any, challenges do youth encounter while searching for housing and signing a lease?

- o Probe: transportation, finding units, affording security deposits, passing landlord screenings, etc.
- o [If also serve families] How does this compare to the challenges that families encounter?
- o How, if at all, do these challenges differ for youth who are parenting, versus those who are childless?
- How does your organization respond to those challenges?
- How do other organizations respond to those challenges (the PCWA, PHA, partner organization(s))?
- What, if any, financial resources do you have available to help youth to search for and sign a lease for housing? How easy or hard are they for FUP youth to access?
  - o Probe: providing cash assistance to cover utility startup or pay utility arrears, moving cost assistance, security deposits, application fees, or other essential expenses.

**Post Signing a Lease, Supportive Services, and Child Welfare Case Closure
Now we'd like to learn more about your role in supporting youth once they sign a lease.**

- Once FUP youth find housing, what, if any, post-move services do you provide to FUP youth?
  - o Probe: Probe: basic life skills information budget counseling, credit counseling, periodic check-ins, counselling on compliance with lease, landlord-tenant mediation, job counselling and help with job search, educational and career advancement counselling and support
- What other services do you provide to youth?
  - o Probe: a needs assessment to identify all the youth's needs, referrals to services to address needs, and regular contact (based on need) with the youth to follow up on these referrals and provide new referrals as necessary
- [If PCWA staff] Are these services different from other youth involved in the child welfare system who are not participating in FUP?
- How long do you provide services? Are you committed to work with the youth for a certain period of time after signing a lease?
- How often do you meet with youth?
- Does someone from another organization provide services after the youth secure housing? If yes: Please describe.
- What, if any, services do you provide to youth after their voucher expires?
- [If any FUP youth in site participate in FSS] Do any of the youth you work with participate in [PHA name]'s Family Self-Sufficiency program?
  - o (If yes) What services do they receive through that program? Do those services complement or substitute for the other services that FUP youth receive?
  - o (If yes) How, if at all, does the program help youth?
- How, if at all, do the post-lease-up services that you provide to you differ for those youth who are parenting versus those who are childless? Why is that?
- What, if any, services are needed by FUP youth after they find housing that are not currently being provided?

o Why do you think this is?

Partnerships and Systems Integration
Now, we'd like to hear more about how you interact with other agencies and organizations serving FUP youth.

- How, if at all, do you interact with [PHA name] staff about FUP youth?
  [If yes]
    o Do you work with one particular person at the PHA, or does it differ depending on the youth?
    o In what way do you work with them? What kinds of issues do you discuss?
    o How easy or difficult has it been to work with PHA staff? Why?
    o What training has the PHA provided to you on referring or working with FUP-eligible youth?
       ▪ Please describe any additional training that would be helpful.
- [If CoC-funded agency staff] Do you interact with [CoC lead organization name] staff about FUP youth?
    o Do you work with one particular person at [CoC lead organization name]?
    o In what way do you work with them? What kinds of issues do you discuss?
    o How easy or difficult has it been to work them? Why?
    o What training has [CoC lead organization name] provided to you on referring or working with FUP-eligible youth?
       o Please describe any additional training that would be helpful.
- [If referring or service agency staff] Do you interact with [PCWA name] staff about FUP youth?
    o Do you work with one particular person at the [PCWA name], or does it differ depending on the youth?
    o In what way do you work with them? What kinds of issues are discussed?
    o How easy or difficult has it been to work them? Why?
    o What training has the [PCWA name} provided to you on referring or working with FUP-eligible youth?
       ▪ Please describe any additional training that would be helpful.
- Do you interact with other partner agency staff about FUP youth?
    o Do you work with one particular person, or does it differ depending on the youth?
    o In what way do you work with them? What kinds of issues are discussed?
    o How easy or difficult has it been to work them? Why?

Big Picture and Reflections
- Have you encountered any major challenges serving youth with FUP? If so, please describe.
    o If yes: How did you overcome those challenges?
- Have any factors been particularly helpful in using FUP to serve youth?

- If you had the opportunity, what would you do to change or improve the program?
- How, if at all, do you think FUP has impacted how you or your organization provides services to youth?
- Do you feel that the FUP program serves youth as it was intended to? Please explain.

Closing
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.
Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think I should know about the FUP program or your experience with FUP youth?
Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?