

Instrument 2: Semi-Structured Protocol: Focus Group with Engagement Strategy Staff

A Breakthrough Series Collaborative for Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare

This protocol will be used to facilitate focus groups with staff involved with father and paternal relative engagement strategies who are not part of the Improvement Team to explore their perspectives on the implementation, feasibility, and success of the BSC and strategies.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour and a half. This collection of information is voluntary and all responses collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project

Semi-Structured Protocol: Focus Group with Engagement Strategy Staff

***Note to interviewer:** The following script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews.*

Introducing the interviewer and co-interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME].

Explaining the project and the purpose of the group discussion

We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our project is designed to support and learn about how child welfare agencies can engage fathers and paternal relatives using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology. The BSC is an approach used to reach important system-wide goals. Organizations conduct small tests of change and collect data from the tests to improve their practice. In this case, the sites in our study had the goal of improving their engagement of fathers and paternal relatives, and Mathematica is working with the sites to support the implementation of the BSC.

We are interested in hearing about [child welfare agency name]'s experience using the BSC to identify and implement promising strategies to enhance fathers' and paternal relatives' engagement. As staff who implemented those strategies as part of the BSC's small tests of change, we are also interested in learning about the activities you have participated in to engage fathers and paternal relatives, what you find helpful about the tests of change, and what you think should be improved. We hope you feel comfortable enough to speak freely about your experience.

Privacy and taping

Our study team will summarize today's discussion for the purposes of this project only. We will keep the information provided in these discussions private to the extent permitted by law. We will not use any names or associate your name with a specific statement. We value the information you will share with us, and want to make sure we capture it all by using the recording. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder.

Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, you do not need to respond. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

Does anyone object to our recording the discussion? Before we get started, does anyone have any questions?

[The discussions will be tailored to the specific persons interviewed and interview format. To the extent information is not available from other sources collected through the BSC, such as the plan-study-do-act planning form and tracker, the following are guidelines for points for discussion.]

Ground rules for discussion

Before we start, we want to give you some ground rules about how our time together will go.

- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about 90 minutes. There will be no formal breaks. Please feel free to stretch or use the restroom whenever you need to.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recorder can pick up everyone, but we hope that each of you will contribute. We value your opinions and want to hear about your experiences.
- To keep us on schedule, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We also ask that you keep the discussion private, limited to those who are here today, and not share what you hear with others outside this room.

Also, before we begin I need to share with you that 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 for this information collection 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

To get things started, I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you for your first name and how long you've been with [agency]. Then we will discuss your experiences related to your agency's participation in the BSC. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

A. Please introduce yourself and share how long you have been working at [agency].

1. Please briefly describe your involvement in engaging fathers and paternal relatives before your agency began participating in the BSC.

We'd like to learn more about how the strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives were developed. We're also interested in your involvement in these decisions.

B. Can you briefly describe your primary involvement in the engagement strategies studied as part of the BSC's small tests of change?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Were any of you involved in selecting, adapting, or designing the engagement strategies that would be tested as part of this BSC? If so, how did [agency] select, design, and implement engagement strategies to test in the BSC?
 - a. What were the key issues and challenges your agency faced when designing (or adapting) the strategies? How did you address these challenges?
 - b. What additional strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives would be helpful?

Next, I want to learn about any training or technical assistance you received to test and implement the strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives. As part of this discussion, please consider all forms of support you might have received from within your agency and also from others outside your agency.

C. What supports did you receive to implement and test the engagement strategies?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What preparation did you have to effectively implement the engagement strategies? To understand the intent of testing the strategies?
2. What challenges have you faced with testing and implementing these strategies? What helped you test and implement these strategies?
3. In which areas or ways could you have been better supported?
4. How was the BSC helpful in improving your strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives? What would you have changed about the BSC to make it more helpful?
5. What types of guidance or additional information would have been helpful?

Now that we've talked about how the strategies were tested, how they were implemented, and the supports that you received, we'd like to get a sense of how the testing and implementation were documented.

D. How did the Improvement Team review data to assess whether the engagement strategies you were testing were making things better?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Did you receive guidance on how to interpret and use the findings?

2. How often is documentation about the tested strategies reviewed? Who reviewed it (e.g., supervisor, improvement team, work group)?
3. What made it easier for you to document aspects of using the strategy for the BSC process? What made it challenging?

Next, we'd like to talk about how implementation was influenced by the different domains, which include: (1) Support community, system, and agency environments that value and respect all fathers and paternal relatives; (2) Cultivate racial equity for men of color in the child welfare system; (3) Identify and locate fathers and paternal relatives, from the first point of contact with the family; (4) Assess and address the strengths and needs of fathers and paternal relatives, and barriers for, fathers and paternal relatives; and (5) Continuously involve fathers and paternal relatives throughout the lives of their children.

E. How did implementation of strategies vary by domain?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Were some strategies easier to test and implement than others? Please explain.

We have covered a lot of information today related to your role at [site], and learned a lot about the way your agency engages fathers and paternal relatives, and some of its challenges and successes. Before we finish, we want to get your perspective on how the BSC has changed the work with fathers and paternal relatives.

F. How, if at all, has implementing the strategies changed the way staff at [agency] view and work with fathers and paternal relatives?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How, if at all, have the strategies improved engagement of fathers and paternal relatives at [agency]?
2. How, if at all, has learning about, testing, and implementing changes related to these strategies helped your work?
3. What would you change about the process of using the BSC to test and implement strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives? Which parts of the process have you found challenging?

Thank you for your time today.