

## Instrument 5 -- Focus Group Guide for Families

### Family Focus Groups

#### *Introduction for:*

- *Project Connect family Focus Groups*
- *Services as Usual (SAU) family Focus Groups*

Thank you for joining us today. We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group that will last about 90 minutes.

[For PC focus groups] We are conducting an evaluation of Project Connect, and today we'd like to learn more about your experiences with the program. Specifically, we'd like to learn more about how you became involved with Project Connect and DCYF, your perceptions of substance use treatment and support, and other life stressors or challenges, among other topics. We will use this information to better understand what it means to be involved with Project Connect.

[For SAU focus groups] We are conducting a study of services for families affected by substance use in Rhode Island, and today we'd like to learn more about your experiences with DCYF and relevant services. Specifically, we'd like to learn more about how you became involved with DCYF, your perceptions of substance use treatment and support, and other life stressors or challenges, among other topics. We will use this information to better understand what it means to be involved with services through DCYF.

Before we begin, let's review the informed consent document (review informed consent). As noted in the consent document, your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question or not participate in the focus group at all. There will be no consequences to you if you choose not to participate. We will keep the information you provide private and will not share it with anyone except for research staff working on the study. We ask that you do not repeat anything heard in this discussion outside the group. While the Urban Institute promises to respect your privacy, we must note that your fellow participants may not. Additionally, federal law states 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 data collection is 0970-0XXX and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to one of the most important parts of a focus group experience. We will be assisting the conversation – asking questions, sometimes changing direction or topic a bit— but ultimately, you are talking not only to us, but to one another. We will do a round of introductions to start, but keep in mind that the folks in this room share something important in common—each of you is here because you have something important to contribute to our understanding of what it is like to be a parent involved with [Project Connect/DCYF]. This is a wonderful opportunity for us all to share in a safe space and to learn from one another.

## **Background**

1. If you had to explain DCYF and what to expect to a family in a similar situation as yours, what would you say?
  - a. PROBES: What would you say about FSU workers? What types of things do they do with families? Are workers required to see families a certain number of times a month? How often? Virtually or in person? How much do your DCYF FSU workers and Project Connect worker(s) interact?
2. Here in Rhode Island, are families who might be struggling with substance use treated with respect? Would you consider RI a supportive place for families who might be struggling with substance use?

## **Services Currently Enrolled In [if SAU, skip to #11]**

### **Project Connect Staff and Experiences [Project Connect FG only]**

3. If you had to describe Project Connect to a family that was new to DCYF, what would you say? How would you describe it?
4. At Project Connect, do you work with one primary staff person or with several?
  - a. Thinking about the staff person [or title of role if given] you work with most often what are some things they do with you and your family?
  - b. PROBES: Has anyone had experience with [nurse/parent educator]? What are some of the things [nurse/parent educator] does with your family? How often do you see them? For how long, and where?
5. Tell us about your experiences with the Project Connect staff in the beginning. Did you feel like you could trust them? How important was that to you?

*We understand that some families stop or leave Project Connect, and then start up or return again. We wanted to learn a little more about that.*

6. What are some reasons why some families might stop and then start again?
7. Do staff talk about that happening, and what do they say? (listen and probe for whether staff try to discourage or prevent stopping and starting; if it's normalized/ common)?
8. If anyone has experienced this and would like to share, how did Project Connect treat you when you stopped and later returned? What did Project Connect do during the period when you had stopped.
  - a. PROBES: Did they leave you alone, did they reach out?

### **Interactions of Project Connect/SAU and DCYF Family Services Unit (FSU) workers**

9. How much do your DCYF FSU workers and Project Connect worker(s) interact?
  - a. PROBES: Are workers required to see families a certain number of times a month? How often? Virtually or in person?
10. Did you see your FSU worker less once you joined Project Connect?

## **SAU ONLY**

11. If you're currently enrolled in a program (like [give example]), how much do your DCYF FSU workers and your program worker(s) interact?
  - a. PROBES: Are workers required to see families a certain number of times a month? How often? Virtually or in person?

## **Perceptions about substance use treatment and support**

12. In your opinion, are families in DCYF who are affected by substance use able to get the help they want or need? Why or why not?
13. What are some health care (including treatment medications) and social services that are available? And if you're comfortable sharing, what have been your experiences with services? Would you recommend them to others? Why or why not?
14. Do you feel like the existing services are culturally sensitive and inclusive of families of all different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
15. Here in Rhode Island, are families who might be struggling with substance use treated with respect? Would you consider RI a supportive place for families who might be struggling with substance use?
16. What does RI do well? What could RI do better?

**SAU ONLY**

17. Have you heard of Project Connect? What have you heard about it?

**Challenges Associated with Substance Use**

18. What types of stressors do families struggling with substance use have?

**Project Connect ONLY**

19. Some families have struggles like not having enough food to eat, or a stable job, or childcare, or not having anyone to support them. Some struggles might have happened because of COVID 19, while others may have happened regardless of COVID-19. What types of struggles do families participating in Project Connect have?
20. Does this affect how families are involved in Project Connect?
  - a. PROBES: Does it make families more involved? Or does make it more difficult to stay engaged in Project Connect? (If not already covered) Does Project Connect help families with those struggles? [probe on which ones] What makes you say that?
21. How do these struggles or stressors affect families' experiences in DCYF?
  - a. PROBES: Does it make families more involved? Or do stressors make it more difficult to stay engaged with DCYF? (If not already covered) Does DCYF help families with those stressors? [Probe on which ones] What makes you say that?

**SAU ONLY**

22. Some families face struggles like not having enough food to eat, or a stable job, or childcare, or not having anyone to support them. Some struggles might have happened because of COVID 19, while others may have happened regardless of COVID-19. What types of struggles do families involved with DCYF have?
23. Does this affect how families are involved in DCYF?
  - a. PROBES: Does it make families more involved? Or do stressors make it more difficult to stay engaged with DCYF? (If not already covered) Does DCYF help families with those stressors? [Probe on which ones] What makes you say that?

**Motivation and Overall Engagement**

24. Do you have any advice to other parents and families like yours managing challenges including stresses related to substance use?