

# Instrument 1: Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Interviews with Public Child Welfare Agency Management (Interview, First Site Visit)

This information is being collected to inform the evaluation of the Family Unification Program (FUP) being conducted by a research team at the Urban Institute, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Child Trends. This information will be used to inform the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (HHS ACF) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to improve the administration of the FUP program. All the information you provide will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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

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If you agree to participate in this study and feel that your rights have been violated or that you have not been treated fairly, contact:

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*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 60 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 #: 0970-0514, Exp: 09/30/2021. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Michael Pergamit at mpergamit@urban.org.*

## **Discussion Guide for Implementation Study Interviews with Public Child Welfare Agency Management (Interview, First Site Visit)**

*First Site Visit (within 1 month after FUP grant award)*

Please tell me about yourself and your agency.

- What is your position at the agency?
- What area(s) does your agency cover?
- Is there a staff person who is responsible for the FUP program? What staff position does this person hold (e.g. administrative staff, caseworker supervisor)? Is FUP the only program they work on?

We would like to understand how your child welfare system worked before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Please describe how reports of abuse and neglect come into your system. How would a child or family come to the attention of your agency?
- How many reports do you receive each year? What proportion (or number) of reports are investigated?
- What is the process for responding to reports? (e.g., emergency response, court intervention, voluntary versus involuntary involvement, etc.).
- What are the possible outcomes of an investigation and the court's disposition? (e.g., case opened with services (child remains at home); case not open, but family receives services)
- Is the court involved in the process? If so, when does the court become involved and how?
- How do you decide which families remain in the system (i.e., have an open case), but remain intact ("preservation families"), and under which conditions a child is removed from the home ("reunification families")?
- Please describe the reunification process (e.g. what does the court do, what does the child welfare agency do, does reunification need to occur within a particular timeframe etc.).

- What types of services do “preservation families” receive?
- What types of services do “reunification families” receive?
- Besides FUP, what housing resources does your agency have or have access to?
- Do you use FUP as part of a strategy to align with the Family First Prevention Act?
  - o Probe: Using housing as a means toward keeping children with their parents and providing the stability for the parent to engage in services?
- Please describe how things have changes since the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - o Have there been changes to the number of reports of abuse and neglect the agency receives?
  - o Has it changed how often you meet with clients? And how you meet with clients?
  - o Has it changed the services offered to clients?
  - o Are these changes permanent or are they temporary?

### **FUP Voucher Allocation**

- Our records indicate your plan was to distribute vouchers as follows:  
 [From information collected to create the evaluation plan, relate plan regarding serving families and youth, allocations of vouchers across families and youth, allocation of vouchers across family types, allocation of vouchers across partners.]
  - o Has any of this plan changed? If so, what is the current plan?
  - o Why did you change the plan?

### **Eligibility, Referral Process, and Screening**

- Our records indicate your eligibility guidelines are as follows:  
 [From information collected to create the evaluation plan, relate eligibility guidelines.]

- o Has any of these guidelines changed? If so, what are the current guidelines?
- o Why did you change the guidelines?
- Our records indicate your process for identifying FUP-eligible families and referring them to the housing authority is as follows:

[From information collected to create the evaluation plan, relate identification process, screening and certification process, and referral process.]

- o Before COVID-19, had any of this process changed? If so, what was the process?
- o Why did you change the process?
- o Have you changed the process at all since COVID-19? If so, how? E.g. no longer requiring signatures, new ways of identifying families.
- o Are these changes permanent or are they temporary?

## **Program Model**

We'd like to know what types of services FUP families receive before and after they sign a lease for housing.

Thinking about how things normally work (before COVID-19)

- What types of assistance are provided with the housing application and voucher process? (e.g. gathering documentation, filling out the form). Who provides these services?
- What types of assistance are provided with the housing search, if any? Who provides these services?
- After the FUP household signs a lease, do they receive any services from the PHA? If so, please describe.
- Do they receive any services from the public child welfare agency?
  - o If so, please describe what these services are.
  - o How often do they meet with the public child welfare agency (caseworker)?

- o How long does the public child welfare agency plan to provide services to families after they sign a lease?
  - o Do they need to keep the case open to provide the services?
  - o How often are the cases kept open just to continue providing services?
- Do the FUP families receive any services from other community providers?
  - o If so, please describe what these services are.
  - o How often do they meet with the community provider?
  - o How long does the community provider plan to provide services to FUP families after they sign a lease?
- Are any of these services specifically given to FUP families or are they what all child welfare involved families receive?
- Has any of the services and assistance available to families changed since COVID-19?
  - Has it changed how often or how service providers meet with families?
  - Are additional services now available? Are some services no longer available?
  - Are these changes permanent or are they temporary?

### **Partnership with Public Housing Agency and Other Collaborating Agencies**

- How did the collaboration for FUP come about? Did someone at the public housing authority or the continuum of care (CoC) contact the public child welfare agency? At what level was the contact made (agency head, program director, etc.)?
- Have you ever collaborated with the PHA or the continuum of care (CoC) in the past, on either FUP or another project? If so, please describe that collaboration.
- Please describe the structure of your partnership with the public housing agency.

- o What part of the FUP program is the public child welfare agency responsible for participating in?
- o What part of the FUP program is the PHA responsible for participating in?
- o What part of the FUP program is the CoC responsible for participating in?
- o Please describe the way the FUP program is coordinated, e.g. (a) frequency of meetings between liaisons or program managers, (b) coordination of data systems and/or referral lists of families with vouchers, (c) frequency of meetings/reviews of the program among agency officials.
- How would you characterize the strength of your relationship with the PHA? Why?
  - o *Probe: Are there clear roles and responsibilities? Is there a sense of a common mission? Are processes tailored to work effectively, or are they built as work-arounds to existing processes? Is there trust between the agencies? Has the partnership led to other joint ventures?*
- How would you characterize the strength of your relationship with the CoC? Why?
  - o *Probe: Are there clear roles and responsibilities? Is there a sense of common mission? Are processes tailored to work effectively, or are they built as work-arounds to existing processes? Is there trust between the agencies? Has the partnership led to other joint ventures?*
- Are you collaborating with any other agencies or organization around FUP?
  - o How did that collaboration come about?
  - o How did you determine their role in administering FUP?
  - o How did you work with this organization in developing the FUP application?
  - o Once the vouchers were awarded, did the organization's role in administering FUP change? If so, how?
  - o What role does this agency/organization play in FUP?

- o Have you ever collaborated with this agency/organization in the past, on either FUP or another project? If so, please describe.
- o How would you characterize the strength of your relationship? Why?
  - *Probe: Are there clear roles and responsibilities? Is there a sense of a common mission? Are processes tailored to work effectively, or are they built as work-arounds to existing processes? Is there trust between the agencies? Has the partnership led to other joint ventures?*

### **Community Context**

- Thinking about before COVID-19: How has the local housing market affected your ability to house families with a FUP voucher?
  - Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?
- Thinking about before COVID-19: How widely available are housing assistance programs? E.g. public housing? Section 8 vouchers? State funded vouchers?
  - Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?
- Thinking about before COVID-19: Please describe the social services landscape. How widely available are other social services?
  - Has this changed at all during COVID-19? If so how?

### **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 families?

Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?