

Instrument 6

Families Not Enrolled in Head Start Focus Group Guide

**SPRING 2022 HEAD START REACH CASE STUDY SITE VISITS
FAMILIES NOT ENROLLED IN HEAD START
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

In spring 2022, the Head Start REACH team will use this guide to conduct a 90-minute focus group with Head Start-eligible families not enrolled in Head Start, at organizations that partner with Head Start programs. We will conduct a total of six focus groups with non-enrolled parents (one organization per Head Start program). Each focus group will include 8-10 families; only one parent from each family will be asked to participate. We will ask parents to fill out a consent form. We will seek parents' permission to record all focus groups. Participating parents will receive \$40 as a token of appreciation.

NOTE: This is a guide, not a script. The guide has been developed to apply to Head Start-eligible families with young children who are not currently enrolled in Head Start. Moderators will need to tailor questions to specific partner organizations and add probes to further explore the experiences recounted by group members.

A. INTRODUCTION

A. Moderator and co-facilitator introductions

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm; and we are here to learn about how decisions are made and experiences with child care arrangements. My name is [NAME] and my colleague is [NAME].

B. Explanation of Project and Purpose of Group Discussion

We are conducting a study called Head Start REACH on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We are interested in hearing about your experiences as part of this broader research study that is looking at how Head Start agencies and community organizations work together to meet the needs of families with young children. We are interviewing staff at [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] and staff from Head Start and holding discussion groups with parents like you to ask about your experiences with child care arrangements. A discussion group, also called a focus group, is a way to find out what people think through group discussion. We are interested in learning about your ideas, feelings, and opinions. We also are interested in learning about what you know about local child care options, how you came to your current child care arrangements, and what would have been helpful to you as you thought about child care options. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, but we will not use any of your names in our final report, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions.

C. Confidentiality and Taping

The information we collect will be summarized only for the project. Although we will be taping the session and taking notes, we will not use any names; if we use quotes, we won't attribute them to anyone.

We will not share any information you tell us with [PARTNER ORGANIZATION]. We value the information you will share with us and want to make sure we capture it all. Only study staff will listen to the recordings and we will destroy the recording at the end of the project. Data from this study will be transmitted to the [Child & Family Data Archive](#) or a similar data archive at the end of the study so it can be used by other researchers. No personal information that could identify you or the programs that serve you will remain in the interview notes that are shared with the data archive.

Is it okay for us to start the recording?

D. Ground Rules for Discussion

Before we start, we want to provide guidance about how our time together will go:

- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about 1 and 1/2 hours. There will be no formal breaks. If needed, please feel free to stretch or go to the bathroom.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your input.
- 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 speak up and tell us your thoughts and feelings.
- Everyone's circumstances are different and what is shared here should not be discussed outside of this gathering.
- To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- Each person here today will receive a \$40 gift card to show our appreciation for your feedback at the end of the session.

B. QUESTIONS

E. Introductions

To get things started, I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you for your first name, how many children you have, and what their ages are. Then we'll discuss your experiences related to child care. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

- 1.** Please introduce yourself and share how many children you have and their ages.

F. Current Child care Arrangements

I'd like to first discuss your current child care arrangements for your youngest children.

- 2.** How many of you have children who are younger than 5 years old? ASK FOR A SHOW OF HANDS AND NOTE NUMBER.
 - a.** How many of you are taking care of them yourselves full time?
 - b.** How many of you are relying on help from friends, neighbors, and relatives to watch your young child(ren) on some regular basis? This could be in your home or in their home.

- C. How many of you send your child(ren) to some kind of child care program? This could be through a community organization like a Y, or a church or other religious organization, or a child care program like KinderCare.
3. What were your reasons for choosing this type of child care?
 4. What do you care about when looking for a child care program or caregiver? (Or what would matter most if you decided to look for a child care program or caregiver?) PROBE: Are there other factors that matter to you? (PROBE: quality, cost, transportation, taking all children in the family, having other services)
 5. For those of you who are sending your young child(ren) to a child care program, how did you learn about the program you chose?
 6. Did you receive any information from [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] about child care options available to you?
 - a. IF YES: Was it only about the program you chose, or did they discuss more than one program?
 - b. IF YES: What kind of information was shared with you?
 7. Have you met with someone at [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] to discuss your child care needs? This can be in-person or over the phone.
 - a. IF YES: Did the person you met with at [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] help you find and get enrolled in child care?
 - b. IF YES TO HELP WITH CHILD CARE How did they help you? PROBE: make calls for them, take them on a child care tour, help fill out paperwork
 8. Would you have liked more information about child care options?
 - a. What information do you think would have been useful to you?
 9. How would you most like to receive or be given information about child care options? What do you consider the best ways to get this information? [PROBE: flyers, word-of-mouth from someone you know, advertisements, open-houses, recommendations or referrals]
 - a. Why does this/do these methods work best for you?

G. Awareness and knowledge of Head Start

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about a program called Head Start.

10. What do you know about Head Start? Can you describe your understanding of what Head Start programs do? IF NO ONE HAS HEARD ABOUT HEAD START, SAY THE FOLLOWING THEN SKIP TO ITEM 13: Head Start is a federally funded program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, family support and family engagement services to children and families with low income. Head Start services are free for eligible families.
11. IF ONLY CHILD CARE MENTIONED: Do you know if Head Start programs provide more than child care, and if so, what?
12. Do you know of any Head Start programs in your community?

H. Child Care Preferences and Awareness of [PROGRAM]

Now I'd like to discuss a specific child care program in your community.

- 13.** What, if anything, do you know about [PROGRAM NAME]?
- 14.** Where did you hear about [PROGRAM NAME]? *If Partner Organization not mentioned ask: Do you remember if [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] ever mentioned or discussed [PROGRAM NAME] with you?*
- 15.** What do you remember [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] saying about [PROGRAM NAME]? Did [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] share any materials related to [PROGRAM NAME]?
- 16.** Do you recall meeting any staff from [PROGRAM NAME]? When and where did you meet these staff?
- 17.** What are your reasons for not enrolling in [PROGRAM NAME]?
- 18.** Would you consider enrolling your child(ren) into the child care program at [PROGRAM NAME]? Why or why not?

We will wrap-up today's discussion with a few questions about your overall experience with [PARTNER ORGANIZATION].

- 19.** Thinking about the services and assistance you receive from [PARTNER ORGANIZATION], how satisfied have you been overall? What contributes to this level of satisfaction?
- 20.** And how satisfied are you with [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] in terms of helping you find child care?
- 21.** Do you think [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] could do more in the area of assisting you in finding child care? IF YES: What could they do?
- 22.** Is there anything else you would like to share about the challenges of finding and using child care and what might help?

This concludes our questions for today. Thank you again for taking time to answer our questions. Does anyone have a question or comment they'd like to share before we end?

[Distribute gift cards and get signed receipt].