

PARTICIPANT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR NEXT STEPS FOR RIGOROUS RESEARCH ON TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

A. Background

1. 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 your experiences with the [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]. My name is [NAME] and my colleague is [NAME].

2. Explanation of project and purpose of discussion

We are interested in hearing about your experiences as part of a broader research study, Next Steps for Rigorous Research on Two-Generation Approaches, that is looking at how programs like [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] are designed, operated, and can be improved. Since the fall of 2020, we have been working with [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] to help them strengthen the services they provide to families. As a part of that work, we are holding discussions with people like yourselves to ask about their experiences with the program. Talking with people who participate in the program is a good way to learn about what the program is really like. We are also interested to learn about what program activities you have participated in; what you find helpful about the program; and what you think can be improved.

3. Privacy and recording

We expect this discussion to take about 60 minutes. Before we start, I want to let you know that your participation in this discussion is voluntary. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, and we will not attach your name to your response, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions. We value the information you will share with us and want to make sure we capture it all by recording it. 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 recording.

There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate in this discussion. 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?

Great. You should have received a form recently that has all the information I just mentioned about this focus group. If you think of questions about the study after we are done today, you can call the number that's provided on the form. If you didn't get a form, just let me know and I'll make sure to get you one.

4. Ground rules for discussion

Before we start, we want to agree on some ground rules about how our time together should go.

- This will be an informal discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion. There may be times in the discussion where you feel differently from others and we want to hear about that. Even though you may feel differently than others in this discussion group, you represent others who aren't participating today who may have similar feelings.
- There will be no formal breaks. Please feel free to stretch or use the restroom whenever you need to.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so we can understand you clearly, but we hope that each of you will share your thoughts at some point. We have un-muted everyone to allow free conversation, but if you are in a place with background noise, we ask that you mute yourself when you are not speaking. Does anyone have questions about how to use the mute button? If so you can type your comment in the chat window so that we can help.
- I have my video on. If you are able, we invite you to turn your video on as well, but you do not need to.
- I have a lot of questions to cover, so I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We encourage you to find a quiet, private place to participate in the conversation so that you can share freely and so that we can hear you well. We also ask that you keep the discussion private, and do not share what you hear here with others.

Does that sound okay? Do you have any questions or suggestions before we get started? If there are no other questions, I'll start the recording.

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B. Introductions

Let's start with introductions.

1. Can you share your first name and how long you have participated in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?
2. Which members of your family also participate in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]? If your children participate in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM], how old are they?
3. Why did you decide to participate in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?

- a. What services or resources did you hope to access by participating in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?

C. Program services

We would like to discuss the services you and your family receive and activities you and your family participate in. First let's discuss you, specifically. Then we'll discuss the services your [child/children] receive and participate in.

1. Parent services

1. What services or activities have you or other adults in your household or in your child's life participated in since joining [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]? [*PROBES: services that focus on employment or education, parenting, health, or help accessing benefits, and/or specific services that are the focus of program improvement*]
 - a. How long have you been participating in these services or activities?
 - b. How often do you or [OTHER ADULT] participate in these services or activities?
2. Which services or activities have been the most helpful to you [or OTHER ADULT]? Why?
 - a. Which services or activities have been most enjoyable? Why?
 - b. Which services or activities do you think are making the most difference? Why?
3. Which services have been least helpful and why?
 - a. What would you change about the services or activities? [*PROBES: Consider things like the time when it is offered, how often it happens, how long a session is, how easy or difficult it is to receive services, and how easy or difficult it is to coordinate the schedule for your services with your child(ren)'s schedule.*]
4. What other services or activities for yourself would you like to receive that are not currently offered in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?
 - a. Have you received referrals to other services? If so, what services were they for? Did you follow up on those referrals?

2. Child services

1. What services or activities have your child(ren) participated in as part of [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?
2. What services or activities have been the most helpful to your child(ren)? Why?
 - a. What services or activities have your children enjoyed the most? Why?
3. Which services have been least helpful to your child(ren) and why?
 - a. What would you change about the services your child(ren) have received or activities they participated in?

4. What other early-learning or child development services or activities would you like your children to participate in that are not currently offered in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?

D. Family experience in program

Let's talk about your interactions with the program, who you work with, what you work on, and what has helped you or made it more difficult to participate in the program.

1. Have you had individual meetings or discussions with program staff? How often do you meet?
 - a. How many different staff have you met with?
 - b. Please describe what normally happens during these meetings. What general topics did you discuss?
2. Do you work with staff to set goals as part of participating in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM]?
 - a. Did you discuss separate goals for parents or other caregivers, children, and the whole family?
 - b. How do you provide information to program staff about progress toward these goals?
3. What makes it easier for you and your family to participate in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] activities and participate in services?
4. What gets in the way or makes it difficult for you and your family to participate in activities and services?

E. Wrap-up

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us. As we close our discussion, we're interested in your final reflections on [TWO-GEN PROGRAM].

1. Imagine you were telling someone else about how [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] can support them. What would you tell them are its best features?
2. Imagine you were leading [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] and you wanted it to be the best program possible for supporting people like you. Where would you focus on expanding or improving it and why?
3. Is there anything we haven't discussed about your experience participating in [TWO-GEN PROGRAM] that someone else considering participating in this program would want to know before starting?
 - a. *[PROBE: It can be a positive or a negative thing, just something important for someone new to the program to understand.]*