

## **Instrument 1:**

### **Hennepin County Children and Family Services Family Interview and Focus Group Protocol**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this [interview/focus group]. This is an important part of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project. We want to learn about how we can use behavioral science to make your experience with Hennepin County Children and Family Services better. We want to hear your thoughts about working with this agency and your ideas about how to improve the experience for individuals and families.

This interview/focus group is completely voluntary. Program staff will not see these responses and your responses will not affect decisions about your case. The research team working with Hennepin County Children and Family Services on the project will summarize all responses. In sharing what we learn from talking with you and others, we will never use your name or otherwise identify you.

[If a focus group] We ask that you not share anything that is said here outside of this group. However, we cannot guarantee that others will not do so. You can also share any comments with us privately.

Please read and sign the consent form. Then we can get started. I will record the conversation so we don't miss anything you say. Only members of the research team will hear the recording, but you can also share any comments with us at the end, when we've turned the recorder off.

*Your participation is voluntary. The [interview/focus group] will take about one hour of your time. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), 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 collection is 0970-0502 and the expiration date is 08/31/2022.*

## **Informed Consent: Participant Interviews and Focus Groups**

You are invited to participate in [an interview/a focus group] for the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project.

### **What is the study about?**

MDRC, a nonprofit social policy research organization, and its partner MEF Associates are conducting this project on behalf of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families. This project's goal is to use behavioral science, which incorporates ideas from psychology and economics, to improve communication with and engagement for families who are involved with Hennepin County Children and Family Services.

### **What will I need to do?**

We are talking with families who are currently or previously involved with Hennepin County Children and Family Services and asking them to share their thoughts and experiences. This [interview/focus group] will take up to 1 hour and gives you an opportunity to share your perspective.

### **Does the [interview/focus group] involve any risk to me?**

There are no major risks from participating. The main risk is feeling uncomfortable discussing your experiences. You can choose not to answer any of the questions that make you uncomfortable. We have very strong security measures in place and will make every effort to protect your privacy. There is a small possibility of someone outside of the study staff hearing or seeing your responses [or someone in the focus group repeating your answers].

### **Will the [interview/focus group] help me?**

Participating in the [interview/focus group] will probably not help you directly, but sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the experiences of future individuals and families.

### **Do I have to [do the interview/participate in the focus group]?**

You do not have to [do the interview/participate in the focus group] if you do not want to. You can [stop the interview/leave the focus group] at any time. Your participation in the [interview/focus group] will have no effect on services you or your family receive from Hennepin County Children and Family Services or any other organizations. [If interview/focus group is virtual: If you take part in an interview using Zoom, you will have the option to share video or keep it off if you wish for your image or background to remain private. Tips on using Zoom are included on this sheet.]

We would like to record the [interview/focus group] so we can concentrate on what you are saying and to help with our notes. However, if you do not want us to record, we will not. If there

is anything you would like to say without being recorded, you can ask to pause the recording at any time.

### **Will I receive anything for my time?**

To express our appreciation for your participation, we will give you a \$25 gift card for participating in the [interview/focus group].

### **Will you tell people what I say?**

The study team will not share your answers with anyone, unless you say something about hurting yourself or others or if you describe someone else being hurt. [Focus group only: There is a possibility of someone in the focus group repeating your answers, but we are asking all participants to keep this conversation private.] Otherwise, only the study team will read the notes or listen to the recording and no one at Hennepin County Children and Family Services, including your caseworker will hear your answers. We may use some specific quotes, but we won't include anyone's name. When the project is over, we will destroy our notes and recordings.

### **Questions:**

If you have questions about the study, you can call the project director, Clinton Key at MDRC at 212-340-4489.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), 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 collection is 0970-0502 and the expiration date is 08/31/2022.

### **Instructions for turning video on / off on Zoom**

- Locate camera symbol in the lower left-hand corner of the screen.
- To turn on your camera, click this symbol when it says "start video."
- To turn off your camera, click this symbol when it says "stop video." You'll know your video is off if the button shows a red line through the camera and says "start video" beneath it.
- For more help, visit <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362313-How-Do-I-Test-My-Video->

### **Instructions for using a virtual background on Zoom:**

- A virtual background allows you to display a picture or image behind you during a meeting. It's a way to show your face without showing your surroundings.
- These backgrounds can be great, but some people have trouble getting them to work. Some people also report that it can slow down their internet connection and make it harder to see or hear what's happening in a meeting.

- For details steps on setting up a virtual background, visit <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>

**[For Written Consent] Statement**

“I have read this form and agree to participate in the interview or focus group. I know that my participation is voluntary and that MDRC follows strict rules to protect my privacy. I know that I can refuse to answer any questions and that I can stop participating at any point.”

---

Name of Study Participant (Print)

---

Signature of Study Participant

**[For Verbal Consent]**

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

Do you feel comfortable with me recording our discussion?

Record response.

- If yes, proceed
- If no: “No problem. Thank you for your time today.”

***Draft Parent Interview and Focus Group Guide***

**Introduction**

1. [Focus group only:] Please go around and quickly introduce yourself.
2. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - a. How many children do you have, and how old are they? What do you like to do together?
  - b. Who is the person in your life you go to when you need things like last-minute childcare, or you just need someone to talk to?
  - c. Do you have a person or place you feel like you can go to when you need help getting something (e.g., paying bills or buying groceries) or going somewhere (e.g., rides to work or doctors appointments)?

**Experiences and Engagement with Children and Family Services**

3. Can you tell me about your recent experience with Children and Family Services?
  - a. How did it begin? What was that first contact like?

- i. At that time, did you know why they had contacted you?
    - ii. What information do you remember them sharing when they first contacted you?
  - b. What part of the process are you in now (Investigations, ongoing CM, case closed)?
    - i. Was it clear to you when your case moved from one phase to another?
  - a. How did your caseworker or other agency staff work with you?
    - i. What did he/she do that was helpful? What are examples of things he/she might have been done to make the process easier for you?
    - ii. Did you feel like anyone from the agency was “on your side?”
    - iii. Did you feel like you could be fully honest or vulnerable with them?
    - iv. What kinds of questions or topics do you discuss with your caseworker?
  - b. Who do you generally go to for questions about or support in navigating your case with Children and Family Services?
    - i. How do you typically communicate (e.g., in person, email, call, text)?
  - c. Have you had a case open with the county previously?
    - i. If so, how did this experience compare to previous experiences with the agency?
4. In these conversations with Family and Child Services, did you complete a case plan or a safety plan with a worker?
  - a. Prior to making the case plan/safety plan, what did you know about it? How did you feel about it?
  - b. Who was in the room / on the phone for that conversation?
  - c.** Do you remember what decisions or plans were made in that meeting?
  - d.** How were [you or different family members] included in decisions and the plan made in the meeting?
    - i.** What was your child’s role in the meetings?
    - ii.** How are their insights/perspectives included in decisions?
  - e. How did you feel when you left that meeting?
    - i. What about that conversation made you feel supported or empowered?
    - ii. What about that conversation made you feel scared, mad, or sad?
  - f. What was required of you? What was optional for you?
    - i. Did you have concerns about what would happen if you did not participate? Did you have anyone you could talk to about these concerns?
    - ii. Did the plan make sense to you?
    - iii.** Did the plan require you to ask for help from outside people or organizations?
  - g. Did the plan require you to apply to or visit new places for support?
    - i. Did your caseworker refer you to another organization to get services, like mental health care or help paying rent? If so, how did that work?
    - ii. What was it like to attend or receive the service?

5. In some cases, Children and Family Services will facilitate what is called a Family Group Decision-Making conversation to develop the service plan or safety plan. FGDM is a meeting where your extended family or other supportive people were in attendance with a facilitator and your caseworker. Did you experience a Family Group Discussion like this when you were involved with Family and Child Services?
  - a. If no: Were there other ways people supportive of you became involved in your experience? Do you think something like this would be helpful? Would you have wanted to have a meeting like that (why/why not)?
  - b. If yes:
    - i. How did your caseworker explain FGDM to you before you agreed to participate?
    - ii. What was that group meeting like?
      1. What did you like or dislike about the group meeting?
      2. What did your family members like or dislike about the meeting?
    - iii. What happened after the FGDM meeting?
      1. Did your caseworker follow up about the safety plan or case plan you created as a team?
      2. Is this something you could see yourself continuing to do with family after this meeting facilitated by Family and Children Services?
  - c. Outside of your involvement with Family and Child Services, do you ever engage in these kinds of conversations with your family or the people close to you -- Where you discuss a decision, problem, or solution as a group?
  - d. What do you think is the purpose of having these discussions in a group? What do you think would be different if these decisions or plans were made with only you and the caseworker? What would make it a “successful” meeting or a “successful” part of the process for you?
6. [If case is closed:] How did you know your case closed? What steps were involved in closing the case? What, if any, has contact with the agency been like since the case closed?

### **Conclusion**

7. We understand that the process of being investigated can be painful for families. Were there other aspects of interacting with CFS that were painful for you during the process that you would like to share with us?
8. During your process, did you feel listened to and respected?
9. Was there anything in particular that was helpful to you during the process? Why?
  - a. How do you think the agency is helping you as a parent? What else could the agency do to be helpful?
10. Are there any changes or improvements you would suggest? (If yes): How come?
  - a. Are there any activities or services you wish were offered through the agency that you haven't heard about?
11. Is there anything I didn't ask about but you would like to share?

OMB # 0970-0502  
Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX