

Instrument 2:
**Hennepin County Children and Family Services Staff and Community-Based
Organization Staff 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 families' experiences working with Hennepin County Children and Family Services better. We want to hear your thoughts about working for this agency and your ideas about how to improve the experience for individuals and families.

This interview/focus group is completely voluntary. [Other] program staff will not see these responses and your responses will not affect decisions about any 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 individuals who are involved with Hennepin County Children and Family Services.

What will I need to do?

We are talking with staff and families 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?

Although participating in the [interview/focus group] may not help you directly, sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the experiences of future staff 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. [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 [program name] 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.

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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.”

Staff Interview/Focus Group Facilitation Guide

Introductions

1. What is your current position?
2. How long have you worked in this program?
3. Have you held previous positions at this or other child welfare/child protection programs?

Organizational Questions

4. How would you describe the organizational culture of your program to an outsider like me?
 - a. What do you consider this agency’s goals?
 - b. What challenges does the agency face in achieving its goals?
5. What is expected of you in your role? What do you have to do?
 - a. How do you know if you’ve been successful in your role?
 - i. With families? With coworkers? With supervisors?

For Staff

6. What kinds of initial or on-going trainings or supports (e.g., coaching, mentoring, supervision) have been most helpful for you to be successful?

7. What helps you to be successful?
 - a. *Probes:*
 - i. What aspects of this agency are you most excited about?
 - b. What are the biggest challenges you face to being successful in your role?
 1. Are there any policies or local systems you feel pose particular challenges for you succeeding in this role?
8. In most cases, how would you describe your relationship with families?
 - a. *Probe:* How do you approach trying to improve that relationship? How do you help families feel comfortable to share information with you? Why do you think it is that way?

For Supervisors

9. How would you describe your approach to management and supervision of your team?
 - a. What are the most effective ways you find to motivate staff?
 1. What are challenges?
 - b. What are the most effective ways you find to introduce new practices or priorities to your unit?
 1. What are challenges?
 - c. What are the most effective ways you find to maintain new priorities and standards of service?
 1. What are challenges?
10. How is the organizational culture in your supervisory unit similar or different to the agency as a whole? What do you think contributes to that?
 - a. Are there any policies or local systems you feel pose particular challenges for you and your team?

Family Engagement and Experiences

11. Broadly speaking, how would you define a “successful” engagement or interaction with a family that has an open case in child welfare?
 - a. *Probes:* What does a good or positive engagement with family units look like? What does a bad or negative of engagement look like? In other words, how do you know if it was a positive or negative interaction?
12. The agency does a series of interviews at the start of a case investigation.
 - a. What are parents told about contacts made with collateral contacts? How is this information communicated?
 - b. What is mandatory versus optional for the family?
13. The agency / program does a strengths and needs assessment and risk and safety assessments with families (refer to point in process map where this occurs)
 - a. What are some of the common goals of the caregivers and children you work with?
 - b. What are some of the common challenges the caregivers and children you work with are facing?

1. We understand that drug abuse is a leading cause of out of home placement.
What can you tell me about how drug use affects the families you work with?
How has that issue come into play in your work?
 - c. What challenges do you have in using these assessment tools?
 - d. Are there any aspects of these tools that you would change to better assess risks or to balance strengths with risks?
14. When families are in need of services (like child care, public assistance, education, health care, mental health, substance use), how do staff make connections or referrals to other providers or to providers from the agency? (refer to process map)
 - a. How do you know a referral is successful?
 - b. What about challenges to making these connections?
15. How does case closure work? (refer to process map)
 - a. How does a family know their case is closed?
16. Across all the things we have just discussed or anything else that comes to mind, where do you see parents not engaging?
 - a. What are some reasons a parent might not attend a meeting, and how do you know the reason?
 1. Probes:
 - Avoids contact assuming the message will be negative (for example, they fear child removal).
 - Forgets about the appointment.
 - Faces multiple challenges and cannot prioritize this particular case-related action.
 - Lacks the motivation to participate.
 - Does not understand what is involved to participate in the visit or meeting due to lack of literacy.
 - Lacks childcare or necessary transportation.
 - Left the last visit/meeting confused.
 - Didn't have enough time to fully understand next steps for the case.
 - Received bad news during the last visit/meeting.
 - Didn't have enough advanced notice to schedule the visit/meeting.
 - b. What happens when parents do not engage in services or follow-through with a particular case plan or activity? Is there anything in your control to address these barriers (if appropriate)?

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) [skip for Community Based Organization (CBO) staff]

17. What is your understanding of FGDM and how it is used at your agency? What is the purpose and benefits of FGDM?
18. Have you ever used FGDM? If yes:
 - a. With which families?
 - b. What are your experiences around scheduling and preparing for FGDM meetings?
 1. How do you discuss FGDM with families [or with your staff if supervisor/administrator]?
 - c. What are your experiences conducting FGDM meetings?
 1. How do you define a successful FGDM meeting?

2. Does FGDM elicit more strengths than typical conversations?
 3. How do you know whether FGDM succeeded in fixing the balance of power?
 - d. What is the child's role in the FGDM meetings? How are their insights/perspectives included in decisions?
 - e. What are your experiences following up on FGDM meetings?
 - f. Do you find FGDM more helpful in some cases versus others? (e.g., risk level, previous involvement in child welfare system)?
 - g. What are the limitations of FGDM? What are challenges to implementing FGDM?
 - h. How do you discuss FGDM with families [or with your staff if supervisor/administrator]?
 - i. If no, why not?
19. What is challenging about implementing FGDM? What are its limitations?
- a. Are there any policies or processes that pose challenges to applying FGDM approach, especially early in the case?
20. Which workplace supports or structures do you think could facilitate FGDM referral and meetings?
- a. Does your supervisor discuss the purpose or best practices of FGDM?
 - b. What are the interactions between investigations staff and FGDM staff? How closely or distantly do they work/meet/see each other?

COVID-19

21. Have there been any changes with how you engage with families now versus before COVID-19?
- a. Have any of those changes made your work more successful?
 - b. Have any of those changes made your work more challenging?
22. Have there been any changes with how you coordinate with your coworkers or supervisors now versus before COVID-19?
- a. Have any of those changes made your work more successful?
 - b. Have any of those changes made your work more challenging?

CBO Staff Questions

23. What is most important for you to help families understand or navigate when they have involvement with the child welfare agency?
24. What kind of support do you see families receiving through their involvement with the child welfare agency?
25. What kinds of fears do you think families have when they're involved with the child welfare agency?

Conclusion

26. What would you do to improve the services and experiences for families?
27. Where do you see your agency in 5 years?
- a. What will be the biggest differences between now and then?
 - b. What role would you like to play to get there?

Thank you again for your participation. If there is anything you've said in the course of the conversation/focus group that you do not want to be anonymously quoted to the Administration for Children and Families or in our final report, please let us know so we can mark it as private. We will also be available if you have any comments you would like to make to us privately. Have a good day.