

Instruments

Engaging Young People in the CFSRs: Focus Group Guide for Facilitators

Focus Group 1: Statewide Data Indicators and the Statewide Assessment

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of what will be discussed and the information that will be gathered through focus group one with young people with lived experience. This guide will be used by the focus group facilitators. It is intended to be a guide, and not read verbatim. There are a series of questions and prompts that will be used to facilitate the session. It may not be possible to cover all of the questions and prompts, and the facilitators will prioritize, as needed.

Facilitator's welcome, introduction, and instructions to participants

Welcome

Welcome and thank you for participating in this focus group. I'm Lupe and I'll be co-facilitating our discussion today, alongside my colleague XX, to make sure I cover everything. There are also a few people who are here to take notes while we talk. We're really excited to talk with all of you—and we want to reiterate that your insights and feedback are very important to the Children's Bureau. I also want to acknowledge that I know you all are very busy with work and other obligations, and please know that we truly appreciate your time today. We expect this focus group will take no more than 60 minutes.

Introduction: A little background...The goal of this focus group is to hear from young people how they would recommend engaging other young people in two components of the CFSRs: the statewide data indicators and the statewide assessment.

Privacy: I would like to assure you that the discussion will be private. Further, XX and I are employees of JBS International—a third party contracted by the Children's Bureau to conduct these focus groups (as are the two notetakers on the call). Our report from the focus group will not contain information that will allow individual participants to be linked to specific statements. Please answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however we encourage you to answer questions and be as involved as feels appropriate and comfortable for you.

Next, I want to go over a few guidelines that we can all agree upon.

Team Norms

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- There are no right or wrong answers.

- You do not have to speak in any particular order.
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Does anyone have any questions? [Provide answers.] Before we get started, may I have your permission to record the conversation (audio and video)? The purpose of recording is to enable us to recall your feedback accurately. **XX**—can you please start recording?

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OK, let's begin!

Warm up

First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Can you tell us your name and bit about yourself?

Focus group Questions

We will begin asking the questions now. There are 4 topics we are hoping to cover.

*Note to facilitators: For each topic, there are a series of questions and prompts. You do not need to read all of the questions or prompts. It is unlikely that you will be able to get through all of the questions and prompts in 60 minutes, so you may have to prioritize and/or guide the conversation, as needed, to cover as much as possible.

Topic 1: Background Information and General CFSR questions

1. Please tell us a little bit about why you might be interested in being involved in the CFSRs?

Prompt: What do you think are some effective ways to engage young people in the CFSRs?

2. In what ways have you been involved in the CFSRs in your state?

*Note: this could be a word cloud based on an open response question.

Prompt: What worked with your involvement?

Prompt: What didn't work?

Prompt: How would you want it to look in the future?

3. How could your state work with young people with lived experience to improve positive CFSR outcomes—safety, permanency, and well-being—for young people in care?

Prompt: More information for context (coaches will read, if needed)

The CFSR examines whether children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system have positive outcomes in three areas: safety, permanency, and well-being. Some of the questions asked to assess these outcomes include:

- **Safety**
 - o Are children and youth safe in their homes?
 - o Can they stay with their families?
 - o If they are not safe, can their families receive the help they need to take care of their children?
- **Permanency**
 - o If children and youth come into foster care, have they stayed in contact with the people who are important to them (i.e., family members, people in their communities)?
 - o While in foster care, have children and youth been moved to different homes only when it is in their best interest (i.e., safer, closer to home, culturally appropriate)?
 - o Was a permanent home found in a timely manner for children and youth in foster care?
- **Well-Being**
 - o Have services provided to families improved their ability to care for their children?
 - o Are children and youth getting the services they need to be healthy and successful? What about physical health, mental health, and educational services?

Topic 2: Profiles (Statewide Data Indicators)

The Children's Bureau creates the data profiles using the state's administrative data (from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System [AFCARS] and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System [NCANDS]) and sends it to the state. It examines the state's performance on safety and permanency outcomes.

4. On our screen, you will see an example of a statewide data indicator profile visualization. As you review it, what comes to mind?

Prompt: What would help you understand this information?

Prompt: What do you find surprising? What is not surprising?

Prompt: How might you want the state to involve you in the process of reviewing profiles/understanding their performance on safety and permanency measures?

5. How could your expertise be used to help the state understand the results of their profile or act on the results?

Prompt: Might it be young people helping child welfare agency staff to use the statewide data indicator (SWDI) results more effectively? Or might it be young people helping child welfare agencies to make meaning out of the statewide data indicator results?

Prompt: What training, resources, and supports do young people with lived experience need to be successful and effective within their role(s) for the statewide data indicators?

6. How could people already using the statewide data indicators (e.g., child welfare agencies, legal and judicial communities, etc.) work to engage young people in reviewing and using the statewide data indicators?

Prompt: Might young people collaborate with child welfare agencies and their partners (e.g., legal/judicial) to review the results statewide data indicators? How would you feel about engaging in meaningful discussions about the results of the SWDIs and how to use them?

7. What do young people feel state staff and professionals need in order to work with young people with lived experience?

Prompt: What skills do federal and/or state staff need to successfully integrate young people into the review team?

Topic 3: Systemic Factors

The CFSR also looks at how well systemic factors are working in each state. These systemic factors refer to 7 systems within a state that are the building blocks, or the foundation, of the child welfare system. States speak to systemic factor functioning in their statewide assessments.

1. Which of the 7 systemic factors do you feel lived expertise would be most impactful for when helping states prepare the statewide assessment and why?

Prompt: How could young people be involved in helping states as they analyze and interpret administrative data? Might young people talk to stakeholders? Might young people review existing documentation?

More information for context:

The 7 systemic factors reviewed are:

1. **Statewide Information System**
 - o Examines whether states collect data about all children and youth in foster care (i.e., demographic characteristics, location, goals)
2. **Case Review System**
 - o Examines whether states ensure each child has a written case plan that is developed with the child(ren), youth, and parents
1. **Quality Assurance System**
 - o Examines whether states review cases for outcomes and use this information to improve practice
1. **Staff and Provider Training**
 - o Examines whether all case workers, supervisors, and foster parents were provided with quality training
1. **Service Array and Resource Development**
 - o Examines whether services are available to help children, youth, and families to create safe home environments
1. **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

- o Examines whether agencies listen to and include input from people involved in the child welfare system (i.e., Tribal representatives, service providers, foster care providers, court personnel)
- 1. **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**
 - o Examines whether states recruit, provide licensing, and work to keep foster parents in practice

Topic 4: Statewide Assessment

The statewide assessment provides information on how the state is doing on outcomes and systemic factors.

1. On our screen, you will see an example of a statewide assessment. As you review it, what comes to mind?
2. How could your expertise be used when helping the state develop their statewide assessment?

Prompt: What interest might you have in helping develop the statewide assessment, and why?

Prompt: Is there a particular aspect that might interest you and if so, why?

Prompt: What would you need to be successful before you started helping with the statewide assessment?

1. How could people already engaged in the statewide assessment (e.g., child welfare agencies, legal and judicial communities, etc.) work to engage young people in the statewide assessment?
 - Prompt: Perhaps it is about ensuring young people have voice about what goes in the statewide assessment? Perhaps staff need to ensure that young people have representation during meetings about the statewide assessment?
2. What do young people feel others need in order to work with young people with lived experience?
 - Prompt: What training for state staff would be useful to help them work better with young people?

Closing Comments (Concluding remarks)

Thank you very much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts with us. In closing, we wanted to give you the opportunity to ask questions or make additional comments.

- A. Do you have any questions, comments, or feedback regarding our discussion?
- B. Are there any topic areas, issues, or concerns relating to the CFSRs?

Closing

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Engaging Young People in the CFRs: Focus Group Guide for Facilitators

Focus Group 2: Onsite Review (Case Reviews/Interviews and Stakeholder Interviews)

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of what will be discussed and the information that will be gathered through focus group two with young people with lived experience. This guide will be used by the focus group facilitators. It is intended to be a guide, and not read verbatim. There are a series of questions and prompts that will be used to facilitate the session. It may not be possible to cover all of the questions and prompts, and the facilitators will prioritize, as needed.

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Warm up

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Focus group Questions

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Topic 1: General Questions/Onsite Review

A joint federal-state team conducts an onsite review of the state child welfare program. The onsite review portion of the Child and Family Services Review includes case reviews, interviews with children, youth and families from the cases reviewed, and group interviews/focus groups with community stakeholders, such as courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, children/youth/families not involved with the cases that were reviewed, and service providers.

1. Poll Question: How young-people friendly do you think the CFSR onsite review is?
Note: This will be a likelihood rating scale (e.g., very friendly, somewhat friendly, not at all friendly)

Prompt: Your answer could be based on what you have experienced, what you have heard, or what you learned during the prep session.

2. What do you think needs to happen to make the onsite reviews young people-friendly?

Prompt: What would it look like for young people to be fully engaged with the onsite review? Does it mean they have active participation, feel uninhibited about providing their input during the review process, fully understand and having buy-in for their role, feel like they are equal partners with other reviewers, etc.?

Prompt: What must *not* happen in order for the onsite reviews to be young people-friendly?

Topic 2: Case Reviews

Case reviews include reading the details of an individual/family's child welfare involvement (i.e., case) and using the Onsite Review Instrument to determine whether aspects of practice were strengths or areas needing improvement. Reviewers must gather and analyze available information to rate each item appropriately through reviewing the case file and interviewing key case participants. In reviewing each case, reviewers consider how the child welfare system worked in concert with its partners including, but not limited to, the legal and judicial communities, law enforcement, and service providers, to meet the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of the child/youth. It is important to identify how the system supported or impeded positive outcomes for the children and family in the case being reviewed.

1. Poll: What role(s) might young people want during the case record review process?

Note: Possible example to use in a rank-ordered poll:

- pull documentation/evidence from case records of someone who is/was involved with child welfare
- take case notes
- enter documentation (narratives, rating) into an online system
- score/rate case records using the onsite review instrument
- be a CFSR ambassador (similar to a NYTD youth ambassador)
- Others

2. How could young people's expertise be used during case record reviews?

Prompt: What strengths do you think young people would bring when reviewing someone's case?

Prompt: What challenges might young people encounter when reviewing other people's cases?

3. What kind of preparation needs to happen before young people participate in case reviews?

Prompt: What training, resources, and supports do young people with lived experience need to be successful and effective within their role(s) during case record reviews?

Prompt: What skills would help state and federal staff work better with young people during the onsite review?

Prompt: How could having opportunities to shadow during the CFSR review process be helpful?

Topic 3: Case-Related Interviews

Case-related interviews include interviews with children and families engaged in services (from the case records that were reviewed).

1. Poll: What role(s) might young people want during the case-related interviews process?

Note: Possible example to use in a rank-ordered poll:

- Support states with recruitment (children/youth; parents; foster parents; case workers)
 - o Prompt to be said out loud (not included in poll option):
Recruitment refers to making the initial contact/providing information about the CFSTRs (which occurs prior to scheduling) to families. It could mean talking with them about what it means to have their case selected and what the interview will be about, along with the importance of the review for systems change but that their involvement won't change the direction of their case.
- Support states with scheduling interviews
- Interview children/youth; parents; foster parents; or case workers who were part of, or involved, in the case records that were reviewed
- Others

2. How could young people's expertise be used when helping the state conduct case-related interviews?

Prompt: How can young people provide expertise on how to engage children/youth, parents, foster parents, and caseworkers in participating in case related interviews?

3. What are your thoughts on having young people interview the people who are connected to the case records that are being reviewed?

Prompt: This could include interviewing the children and families whose case records are being reviewed, the state staff who were involved with the case records that are being reviewed, or the foster parents who were involved with the case records that are being reviewed.

Topic 4: Stakeholder Interviews (group interviews/focus groups)

Stakeholder interviews are group interviews/focus groups with child welfare system stakeholders including, but not limited to, judges and attorneys, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers/supervisors/managers/directors, service providers, and youth/parents who were not involved with the cases reviewed.

1. Poll: What role(s) might young people want during stakeholder interviews?

Note: Possible example to use in a rank-ordered poll:

- Support states with recruitment
- help the state and federal team select youth to be a part of group interviews
- Support states with scheduling interviews
- Interview a group of stakeholders
- Take notes during interviews
- Others

2. What are your thoughts on having young people facilitate group interviews other young people with lived experience?

3. What are your thoughts on having young people facilitate group interviews with other stakeholders, like judges, foster families, child welfare system managers/directors (i.e., the decision makers of child welfare systems) and staff at community agencies?
4. How might the involvement of a lived experience expert during stakeholder interviews encourage more feedback from stakeholders during group interviews?

Prompt: How might the involvement of a lived experience expert during stakeholder interviews discourage feedback from stakeholders during group interviews?

5. How can states encourage young people to participate in group stakeholder interviews?

Prompt: What strategies could state and federal staff use to engage young people in group stakeholder interviews?

Example strategies might include:

- Recruitment: social media
- Incentives
- Transportation
- Access to technology (e.g., providing young people with wifi for virtual interviews via mifi's)

Closing Comments (*Concluding remarks*)

Thank you very much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts with us. In closing, we wanted to give you the opportunity to ask questions or make additional comments.

- A. What could child welfare professionals do to make young people feel valued and important to the CFSR process?
- B. What do you do for self-care that other young people might need during onsite reviews?

Note: This will be word cloud open-response option.

Prompt: How have you de-briefed on previous projects/reviews and how might young people need to de-brief after reviewing case records and/or interviewing people?

- C. Do you have any questions, comments, or feedback regarding our discussion?

Closing

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Engaging Young People in the CFRs: Focus Group Guide for Facilitators

Focus Group 3: Program Improvement Plan (PIP) Development and Monitoring

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of what will be discussed and the information that will be gathered through focus group three with young people with lived experience. This guide will be used by the focus group facilitators. It is intended to be a guide, and not read verbatim. There are a series of questions and prompts that will be used to facilitate the session. It may not be possible to cover all of the questions and prompts, and the facilitators will prioritize, as needed.

Facilitator's welcome, introduction, and instructions to participants

Welcome

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Introduction: A little background... The goal of this focus group is to hear from young people how they would recommend engaging other young people in the Program Improvement Plan, or PIP, development and monitoring component of the CFRs. The questions being asked will be similar for both the development and the monitoring components of the PIP, but that is intentional because the responses may be different based on which part of the process is being discussed.

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OK, let's begin!

Warm up

First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Can you tell us your name and bit about yourself?

Focus group Questions

We will begin asking the questions now.

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General Overview

After the onsite review, states determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the 7 outcomes and 7 systemic factors are required to develop a PIP to address all areas of nonconformity. The PIP provides an opportunity for the state child welfare agency, partners, and stakeholders to use information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review to develop, implement, and monitor a state-specific plan to strengthen the functioning of the systemic factors and improve outcomes for the children and families served. Stakeholders, partners, and youth and parents served by the child welfare system should be involved in improvement planning efforts and can assist the agency in developing, supporting, and monitoring the PIPs.

Topic 1: PIP Development

You can help develop your state's PIP by sharing your ideas about changes you would like to see made in the child welfare system.

1. Poll: How could states use the expertise of young people to develop their PIP?

Example poll options:

- Review data and information to identify factors that contribute to areas needing improvement (also called root causes)
- Identify cross cutting themes (after you identify root causes)
- Developing strategies or solutions that address root causes and cross cutting themes

- Develop theories of change and/or logic models
- Create a vision statement

Prompt: How could states facilitate and ensure young people are included in all aspects of these processes, where they feel like equal partners to others involved?

Prompt: How could states recruit young people to be involved in the CFSR PIP process?

2. How could young people share their ideas about changes they would like to see made in the child welfare system during the CFSR PIP process?

Examples of ways to share ideas: Work with states to identify goals, strategies, and activities for improvement, help states decide how to measure if progress is or is not being made on goals, strategies, and activities, make recommendations for specific activities that could help the states make progress on key goals and activities, or work with states to identify action steps for implementing recommended activities.

Prompt; What benefits do you think states will get from engaging young people with lived experience in the PIP development process?

3. What kind of preparation needs to happen before young people participate in PIP development?

Prompt: What knowledge and skills do young people with lived experience need to be successful and effective within their role(s) during PIP development?

Note: Examples could be knowledge of a PIP, all the acronyms that people use in child welfare, state's CFSR data and other data/information and how all that works with the PIP, the roles and responsibilities of all the different stakeholders at the table (e.g., CQI staff, community partners, legal and judicial communities), etc.

Prompt: What skills do state and federal staff need to help them work better with young people during PIP development?

Topic 2: PIP Monitoring

You can help monitor your state's PIP by sharing your ideas about whether changes being made in the child welfare system are making the intended difference. PIP monitoring also includes monitoring whether the state is implementing the activities within the strategies to improve areas needing improvement (the state only has 2 years to do this). The state also gets penalized if they fail to do something that they said they were going to do. In addition to the 2-year implementation period, there is a period of 1-year of non-overlapping data. If a state does not meet measurement goals during implementation, this period is used to afford states the opportunity to fully implement change from the activities and strategies in the PIP. For example, some activities and strategies may not be implemented statewide, but target a specific region or district of a state and by the conclusion of the 2-year implementation period, statewide implementation may be completed. PIP monitoring also includes assessing whether activities that were implemented had the desired effects.

Please note: This topic has some similar questions to the ones we just covered, but they are questions about a different aspect of the PIP (monitoring, instead of development).

1. How could the state use the expertise of young people to monitor their PIPs?

Prompt: How could young people help states decide how to tell if progress is being made on the goals, strategies and activities of the PIP? How could young people share their ideas about whether the changes identified in the PIP are being made in the child welfare system?

2. What role(s) would young people want in the process of monitoring a PIP?

Prompt: How interested would you be in monitoring the progress being made on goals and letting the state know if the strategies/activities are making a positive difference for families involved with child welfare services?

Prompt: The other aspect of PIP monitoring involves identifying barriers and/or facilitators – that is, if the strategy isn't working – why not? When it is working, what elements supported success? How interested would young people be in participating in these types of activities?

Prompt: What benefit do you think the state will get from engaging young people with lived experience in the PIP monitoring process?

3. What kind of preparation needs to happen before young people participate in PIP monitoring?

Prompt: What knowledge and skills do young people with lived experience need to be successful and effective within their role(s) during PIP monitoring?

Prompt: What skills do state and federal staff need to help them work better with young people during PIP monitoring?

Topic 3: Overarching questions

1. Now that you have heard more about the PIP process, is there a portion young people might have more interest in (i.e., development vs monitoring), or would young people want to be a part of PIP process from development through monitoring?
2. How can the PIP process be improved to better include young people with lived experience?

Closing Comments (Concluding remarks)

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- A. Do you have any questions, comments, or feedback regarding our discussion?

Closing

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Engaging Young People in the CFRs: Focus Group Guide for Facilitators

Focus Group 4: Wrap-Up and Debrief

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

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Introduction: A little background...The goals of this focus group are to ask a few remaining, wrap-up questions and to debrief. We will also ask a few closing questions and answer any remaining questions that you might have.

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- To support connection and engagement in the group, we hope you will turn on your video, but it is okay if you don't.
- What is said here, stays here.

Does anyone have any questions? [Provide answers.] Before we get started, may I have your permission to record the conversation (audio and video)? The purpose of recording is to enable us to recall your feedback accurately. **XX**—can you please start recording?

OK, let's begin.

*Note for facilitators: If someone does not wish to be recorded, please ask them to drop off the call and let them know we will connect with them privately.

OK, let's begin!

Warm up

First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. Can you tell us your name and bit about yourself?

Focus group Questions

We will begin asking the wrap-up questions now and then we will debrief.

*Note to facilitators: For each topic, there are a series of questions and prompts. You do not need to read all of the questions or prompts. It is unlikely that you will be able to get through all of the questions and prompts in 60 minutes, so you may have to prioritize and/or guide the conversation, as needed, to cover as much as possible.

Topic 1: Wrap-Up Questions

3. Now that you have participated in these focus groups, what should a conversation with other young people from foster care about the CFSRs and getting involved look like?
4. How could young people work with their state youth engagement opportunity groups (e.g., Youth Advisory Boards, Councils, etc.) to provide information about the CFSRs?
5. How might young people want to be engaged in the CFSRs on an ongoing basis (rather than just specific components of the CFSRs)?
6. What things should be taken into consideration when involving young people in the CFSRs?
 Prompt: This might be things like scheduling meetings in the evenings, working around young peoples' work/school/personal schedules, etc. This might also include trauma awareness and language appropriateness, such as talking about young people as humans, not as case files.

Topic 2: Debrief

Thank you very much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts with us. We wanted to give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences participating in these focus groups.

1. What were your experiences participating in these focus groups?
 Prompt: What have you learned as a result of participating in the focus groups?

Prompt: When providing your input in these focus groups, what did you like? And what didn't you like?

2. What were your experiences participating in the prep sessions before each focus group?
Prompt: What went well? What, if anything, could we do differently?
3. Do you have thoughts for, or hopes for, how the results of these focus groups will be used to inform how the CB involves young people with lived experience in the CFSRs?
4. Is there anything else that we can do differently when engaging young people with lived experience to talk about their ideas for participation in reviews like the CFSRs?

Closing

Thank you for you taking some time to talk with us today.

If you have further feedback, please contact cw-mail@jbsinternational.com

Note: contact information will also be presented on a slide for participants.