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## MTEC Formative Research Focus Group Discussion Guide for Service Members/Cadets

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### Introduction

#### **Study Description, Background and Consent**

Welcome, and thank you for coming. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I will lead our discussion today; \_\_\_\_\_ will take notes. We both work for Naval Health Research Center (NHRC)/RTI International.

*[Pass out consent forms for each service member (paper copy for in-person sessions; electronic copy for phone interviews). (In-person participants will also receive a second hard copy of the consent form to keep for their records.)]*

You are being asked to volunteer to participate in our research study. Your participation is completely voluntary and will include participating in a focus group/interview. Before we start the study, we will go over some key details and give you time to review the consent form and ask questions.

The purpose of our study is to develop and refine programs to prevent both sexual assault and unhealthy alcohol use at military installations or Service Academies. We are interested in your input about how best to develop and deliver sexual assault and unhealthy alcohol use prevention programs to be relevant and helpful to military personnel and cadets. Specifically, we are evaluating a program that addresses *both* sexual assault and unhealthy alcohol use for men and women. The program involves a combination of internet-based sessions and classroom sessions. The online sessions are viewed privately using a laptop/tablet and headphones. Classroom sessions include activities and discussions in a group setting. Your feedback today will provide us with critical guidance on whether a program like this might work for [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS]. As part of this study, we will talk with groups of men and women [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS].



Duration and Activities. If you agree to participate, your participation will involve completing one approximately 90-minute focus group discussion (or interview) and completing an approximately 5-minute questionnaire. *[For Navy service member participants only...]* If you complete your participation during your off-duty time, you will receive a gift card valued at \$40 for your participation in this study.

Data. The interview will be audio recorded to make sure that we don't miss any of your feedback and the recordings will be transcribed for analysis. Only the research team will have access to these audio recordings and they will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

Also, we may take notes during today's discussion. These will not include your name or anything that could be used to identify you. Other than the contact information you provided to schedule this session, no identifying information will be collected.

Other than the contact information you provided to schedule this session (*if applicable*), no identifying information will be collected during the study. We encourage you to avoid saying identifying names or locations during the focus groups/interviews, but if you do, they will be removed from all transcripts.

Benefits and Risks. Because this is a research study, we must inform you of all risks and benefits to participating. There are no direct benefits to you for participating; however, the information may help researchers learn more about how to best tailor a combined sexual assault prevention and alcohol misuse prevention intervention to your branch of the military, which could help other service members in the future.

There are two primary risks to you in taking part in this study, which are minimal. The first is psychological discomfort. To mitigate this risk, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or you can stop the interview at any time. The second potential risk is loss of privacy and/or breach of confidentiality. The procedures in place to protect the study data and participant privacy include destroying the contact information that participants provided to schedule the focus group/interviews as soon as it is completed and making no attempts to connect contact information with your responses. Also, audio recordings will be permanently deleted as soon as they are transcribed, and any potentially identifiable information will be redacted.

To further protect you, we ask that you not disclose any of your personal experiences with sexual assault or alcohol misuse during your participation in this study. We are only seeking your feedback, opinions, and recommendations on the programs we have developed. It would also put you at risk if you made statements admitting wrong-doing in the focus group/interview because this information could potentially be used against you by those who have a responsibility to report illegal activity or health hazard information. While the research team will keep all of your comments confidential except as required by law, we encourage you not to disclose any illegal experiences.

Does anyone have any questions about the study?

Please take a few minutes now to review the consent form on your own and please ask questions



if there is anything you do not understand about the study.

*[After allowing time for potential participants to review the consent documents and responding to questions, instruct the group to complete the consent form if they have decided to agree to all terms by marking the box labeled “I provide my consent to participate” and another box labeled “I provide my consent to be audio recorded” and providing the date. Service members who do not agree to all study terms, including being audio recorded, will be thanked for their time and excused. Collect marked consent forms. Tell participants that you will be asking them to confirm their consent to participate once more verbally once the audio recorder has been turned on.]*

### **Additional Instructions and Logistics**

- There are no right or wrong answers to our questions, so we hope you’ll be direct and open with us. We are interested in hearing about your thoughts and opinions because **you** are the experts in life as a [SAILOR/MARINE/CADET]. Our goal today is to gain **your** perspectives to inform our sexual assault and unhealthy alcohol use prevention trainings. With your feedback, we are optimistic that future trainings will be as relevant and impactful as possible. We thank you again for being instrumental to this work.
- We ask that you use a pseudonym, or fake name, today, and write that on your nametag. *[Pass out nametags and pens.]*
- If at any point during today’s discussion you prefer to speak without being recorded, you may tell us to turn off the audio recorder while you share. Please also keep in mind that you do not have to answer every question we ask during today’s discussion. It’s always fine to say “pass” or just to remain silent.
- As mentioned, do not discuss your own experiences today regarding assault and/or unhealthy alcohol use, instead, please just share your opinions about how to prevent sexual assault victimization and unhealthy alcohol use. You can refuse to answer questions or discuss issues that make you feel uncomfortable.
- To protect everyone’s privacy, do not reveal anything you hear during today’s discussion group to anyone outside of this group. You can respect other people’s privacy—and they can respect your privacy—by keeping the specifics of today’s conversation confidential.
- Although we have asked everyone to keep these discussions confidential, we also want everyone to be mindful that we cannot guarantee everyone’s privacy. Accordingly, as you are sharing information, please keep in mind the limits of confidentiality.
- Along those lines, should you describe any scenarios that involve other people, we ask that you do not share these individuals’ names. Keeping others’ names



anonymous will make this a confidential environment where you all feel comfortable sharing insights.

- In this interview we are using the terms women and men to include those who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth as well as transgender service members. Please note that we do not intend to exclude non-binary, genderfluid, and intersex identities but aim to align with how sexual assault prevention trainings are currently structured in military settings. As part of today’s discussion, we welcome you to at any point express questions, concerns, and insights related to gender terms as part of this focus group.
- There is no need to raise your hand to speak, but if someone else is talking, let them finish before you speak. We have a lot of questions for you all, and part of my job will be to keep the discussion moving along so we can cover them all without running over time. However, I hope you will be doing most of the talking.

Are there any questions about anything I’ve said so far?

*[Once participants have consented to participate and be recorded, tell participants that you will be asking them to confirm this once more verbally once the audio recorder has been turned on.]*

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### **Start Audio Recorder!**

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*[After beginning the recording, please vocalize the date of the FGD, the military branch (Army, Navy, Marine Corps), the organization/base (e.g., USMA), and the number of participants in the focus group. Then, state aloud, “Can you confirm that you have consented to participate in this study, including being audio recorded? Please state ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’” Each participant will be asked to verbally state on the recording that they have consented.]*

#### **Section A. Demographic Information Survey / Ice Breaker**

Thanks so much. Let’s start out with some introductions. Please tell us the fake name you are using today. In addition, please share what you like to do for fun during your free time. I’ll go first.

*[Facilitators/staff should first introduce themselves and then invite participants to begin].*

*[After concluding the ice breaker, pass out the survey.]* We have a short survey to get some brief demographic information from you. Please only complete the first side. When you are finished, please hang on to the survey and we will ask you to complete the other side a little later in this session.

#### **Section B. Recipients – Organizational Characteristics (Service Member Perspective)**

We value your opinions, both positive and negative. Your honesty today will help us make the best training possible, so we appreciate your openness.



Sexual Assault Prevention Training	
#	Question
B1	To begin, what kinds of <b>sexual assault prevention</b> trainings have you participated in as a [SAILOR/MARINE/CADET] in the last two years? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. If none in that time frame, have you participated in any kind of <b>sexual assault prevention</b> trainings with the [NAVY/MARINE CORPS/USMA]?</li> <li>ii. <i>Probe for details on training format (e.g., online, in a classroom, individual vs. group, used technology like tablets/iPads/laptops, PowerPoint presentation, etc.</i></li> </ul>
B3	What was the <u>most</u> helpful thing you learned in this training?
B4	What do you think was the <u>least</u> helpful thing you learned in this training or class?
B5	Do you remember if there was any content on unhealthy alcohol use integrated into the <b>sexual assault prevention</b> training? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If yes: did you find it helpful? Why or why not?</li> </ul>
B6	What overall recommendations do you have to improve <b>sexual assault prevention</b> training at [LOCATION]?

### Unhealthy Alcohol Use Prevention Training

Thank you so much again for these insights – we’re now going to focus on anything you remember related to unhealthy alcohol use prevention trainings.

By “unhealthy alcohol use,” we mean drinking more than the recommended amount of alcohol, which is consistent with other terms you may have heard of, such as “alcohol misuse,” “heavy alcohol use,” “hazardous alcohol use,” “heavy drinking,” “risky drinking,” “binge drinking,” “problem drinking,” “disordered drinking,” and—for people younger than 21—“underage drinking.”

#	Question
B7	In the last two years, do you recall any trainings related to <b>unhealthy alcohol use prevention</b> outside of the sexual assault prevention courses that we’ve already discussed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. If none in that time frame, have you participated in any trainings specific to <b>unhealthy alcohol use prevention</b> with the [NAVY/MARINE CORPS/USMA]?</li> <li>ii. <i>Probe for details on training format (e.g., online, in a classroom, individual vs. group, used technology like tablets/iPads/laptops, PowerPoint presentation, etc.</i></li> </ul>
B8	What was the <u>most</u> helpful thing you learned in this training?
B9	What do you think was the <u>least</u> helpful thing you learned in this training or class?
B10	What overall recommendations do you have to improve training related to <b>unhealthy alcohol use</b> at [LOCATION]?

### Section C. Program (Intervention) - Service Member Perspective

I appreciate everyone’s insights so far; your feedback has been incredibly helpful! We’re going to shift gears a bit, and I’m now going to show you some sample content from the sexual assault and unhealthy alcohol use training program and ask for your feedback.

#### Sexual Communication and Consent (SCC)

C1	I have one question before we start looking at the sample content. In our sexual assault prevention program, we depict scenarios that are high-risk, like parties with alcohol involved, hazing/initiation rituals, or being the only woman in a group of men in a social setting. Do you have any suggestions for other “high risk” scenarios we should depict in our future work with [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS]?
<i>[Share / show SCC video clip #1].</i>	
C2	Does what you see in this video make sense at [LOCATION]? In other words, would it be



	believable that this scenario/discussion from the video took place at [LOCATION]? Why or why not? <i>i. Probe on how people talk, what people wear, and the scenario itself.</i>
C3	If you were shown this in a group training setting, how comfortable would you feel reflecting about what you saw? Would you prefer to view and reflect on your own?  Please complete the questions about clip #1 on your survey.
<i>[Allow participants to answer the questions about SCC video clip #1 on the survey].</i>	
<i>[Share / show SCC video clip #2].</i>	
C4	Does what you see in this video make sense at [LOCATION]? In other words, would it be believable that this scenario/discussion from the video took place at [LOCATION]? Why or why not? <i>i. Probe on how people talk, what people wear, and the scenario itself.</i>
C5	If you were shown this in a group training setting, how comfortable would you feel reflecting about what you saw? Would you prefer to view and reflect on your own?  Please complete the questions about clip #2 on your survey.
<i>[Allow participants to answer the questions about SCC video clip #2 on the survey].</i>	
<i>[OPTIONAL (time permitting): Share / show SCC video clip #3].</i>	
C6	Does what you see in this video make sense at [LOCATION]? In other words, would it be believable that this scenario/discussion from the video took place at [LOCATION]? Why or why not? <i>Probe on how people talk, what people wear, and the scenario itself.</i>
C7	If you were shown this in a group training setting, how comfortable would you feel reflecting about what you saw? Would you prefer to view and reflect on your own?  Please complete the questions about clip #3 on your survey.
<i>[Allow participants to answer the questions about SCC video clip #3 on the survey].</i>	
<b>eCHECKUP TO GO</b> Now we'd like to show you some images from our unhealthy alcohol use prevention program, which is called "eCHECKUP TO GO." In this program, which is completed online, people first anonymously enter information about their experiences with and attitudes towards alcohol. After they do that, the program provides personalized feedback to show them how their alcohol use behaviors compare to other people of the same age, gender, and service branch, and it also provides personalized suggestions for how to stay safe.	
<i>[Show eCHECKUP TO GO demo #1].</i>	
C8	Here is a screenshot of the personalized feedback that a person would receive from eCHECKUP TO GO showing how they compare to others who are similar to them. In your opinion, do you think this type of feedback might be of interest to [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS]? Why or why not?
C9	If a [SAILOR/MARINE/CADET] were to find out that they drink more than their peers, what effect do you think that would have on them?  Please complete the questions about demo #1 on your survey.
<i>[Allow participants to answer the questions about eCHECKUP TO GO demo #1 on the survey].</i>	
<i>[Share / show eCHECKUP TO GO demo #2].</i>	
C10	Here is an example of the personalized suggestions for how to stay safe when using alcohol someone might receive from the eCHECKUP TO GO program. In your opinion, do you think this type of feedback might be of interest to [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS]? Why or why not?



	Please complete the questions about demo #2 on your survey.
	<i>[Allow participants to answer the questions about eCHECKUP TO GO demo #2 on the survey].</i>
C11	After seeing these portions of the eCHECKUP TO GO program, do you feel it would be well received by [SAILORS/MARINES/CADETS]? Why or why not?

<b>Section E. Closing</b>	
#	Question
E1	That wraps up all of the questions we have prepared for today. Before we finish, is there anything else you'd like to add that we didn't ask about?
<p><i>[Ask notetaker if they have any additional questions]</i></p> <p><i>[Collect surveys.]</i></p> <p>Thank you so much for coming today and for all your helpful comments! Please remember that everything said here today should <u>stay here</u>. Do not repeat what others said during this discussion. It's our hope that we can translate the feedback you gave us into something that has a very real, very positive impact.</p>	

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**Stop Audio Recorder!**

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