

LifeSet Supervisors Focus Group Site Visit #3

Introduction

Thank you for joining us today. We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group that will last about 90 minutes. We are conducting an evaluation of LifeSet, and today we'd like to learn more about how the LifeSet program operates. Specifically, we will talk about youth engagement, things that support or hinder the program's success, and staff supervision among other topics. We will use this information to better understand how the LifeSet program operates and serves young adults in New Jersey.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question or not participate in the interview at all. There will be no consequences to you if you choose not to participate. We will keep the information you provide private and will not share it with anyone except for research staff working on the study. Additionally, federal law states that 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 data collection is 0970-0577 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.

Background and Role

Welcome everyone. Let's go around the room and briefly introduce ourselves. I'll start [facilitator introduces self]. Please share the following:

1. Your name
2. How long you have been a LifeSet Supervisor?
3. What is the size of your caseload?

Thank you for sharing. This is the second focus group we've held with LifeSet Team Supervisors in New Jersey. During our first focus group in June 2022, we learned about the LifeSet program model and how services are delivered. Today we'd like to discuss other areas of the program's operation and interactions with youth.

Staff Requirements and Responsibilities

First, I want to learn about your processes for staff supervision, consultation, and assessment.

Supervision and consultation

4. Can someone describe LifeSet's supervision requirements? For example, how often and for how long do you meet with specialists?
 - a. Is supervision done individually or in a group?
5. Can someone describe what a typical supervision meeting with a Specialist is like?
 - a. [If needed] Where does supervision take place? What topics are discussed?
6. Do LifeSet supervisors receive supervision as part of the LifeSet model?
 - a. [If yes] Can someone describe the supervision you receive? [Probe on: who provides supervision, how often and for how long, is it individual or in a group, etc.]
7. Are there resources from Youth Villages or the LifeSet model that you refer to often in your work as a supervisor?
 - a. If so, what are those resources?
 - b. What resources that aren't available do you think might be helpful in your work as a supervisor?

Staff assessment

8. Are LifeSet supervisors responsible for assessing the performance of LifeSet specialists?

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- a. [If yes] Please describe the assessment process, such as your role in the assessment, the methods you use, and how often they are done.
 - i. Is this assessment part of the LifeSet model or is it the same assessment for all employees of your agency?
 - b. [If no] What informal ways do you use to assess specialists' performance?
9. How is feedback about performance shared with specialists?

Data Systems and Use

Next, I'd like to learn about the data systems and reports you use for LifeSet.

10. About how much time during a typical week do you spend entering information into one or more data systems? [Probe on differences for those using multiple versus single systems]
- a. Does this time impact your ability to provide supervisory support to the Specialists? Why do you say that? Could someone give an example?
11. Can someone describe how they use data or reports during supervision with Specialists?
12. How are data or reports used to support decision making or program improvements?
- a. [Probe] Are the data used to inform decisions about youth's services or needs? Could someone give an example?

Fidelity

The next couple questions are about whether LifeSet is being delivered with fidelity. By fidelity, I mean consistently following the procedures from the LifeSet manual for things like what activities occur, how, and when.

13. Would you say it is easy or difficult to maintain fidelity to the LifeSet model over time? Please tell me why you think that.
- a. [probe if needed] Can you give an example of what makes it easy or difficult?
 - b. What resources are needed to sustain fidelity to the model? [If needed: For example, more or different training, agency-provided car, updated computers or data systems, staff retention]
14. Do the LifeSet Specialists believe in following the model?
- a. [Alternative wording, if needed] Have you found that LifeSet Specialists tend to follow the model, even if they might prefer a different approach? Does anyone have an example they can share?

Service Delivery

Youth engagement

I would like to understand how and how much youth are engaged in LifeSet. I use the term "engagement" broadly to include service uptake, youth's involvement or participation in LifeSet activities, and contact between Specialists and youth. It also includes things the specialists do to encourage youth to engage with LifeSet.

15. How would you describe the typical youth's level of engagement with LifeSet services? What level of youth engagement is expected?
- a. What techniques does the program use with youth who are reluctant or say they don't need LifeSet?
16. What are the characteristics of LifeSet Specialists that make them especially good at engaging with youth?

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17. As a supervisor, how do you help your teams address challenges they have had in engaging youth in services?

Cultural responsiveness

18. Do you consider the LifeSet program to be culturally responsive? [If needed] In other words, is the program able to take into account youths' unique demographic backgrounds and experiences (such as, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, citizenship status)?
- If so, in what ways? Could you give some examples?
 - In what ways are LifeSet services not responsive to youths' demographic and cultural backgrounds?

Difference between LifeSet and SAU

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about how LifeSet services compare to the other programs and services that youth preparing to leave foster care may receive.

19. In what ways is LifeSet similar or different from other services usually provided to youth leaving foster care?
- [Probes if needed] Types of services offered, intensity or duration, program philosophy or values
20. Are some youth a better fit than others for LifeSet? If so, what makes youth a good fit for LifeSet?

Partner Relationships

I'd like to talk next about how you work with DCF, Youth Villages, and other agencies.

Relationship among implementing agencies

21. Who do you talk to at DCF and in what ways do you work with them?
22. Who do you talk to at Youth Villages and in what ways do you work with them?

Relationships with other entities/systems

23. Besides DCF and Youth Villages, do you collaborate with other agencies or organizations to support youth in LifeSet?
- [Alternative wording, if needed] Do you collaborate with schools or training programs, legal aid, probation, mental health, or other organizations?
 - Who do you work with and in what ways?

Implementation Infrastructure

The next series of questions is about things that may impact, either positively or negatively, your ability to carry out LifeSet.

Impact of policies

24. What impact do DCF rules or regulations have on your ability to provide services youth need? Do they make it easier or harder?
25. What impact do Youth Villages rules or regulations have on your ability to provide services youth need? Do they make it easier or harder?

Challenges, supports, and barriers

26. What challenges have you encountered carrying out the LifeSet model? How did you overcome these challenges?

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27. What things have helped support carrying out the LifeSet model?
 - a. [If needed] For example, technical assistance from Youth Villages, availability of services youth needs, data systems or technology, coordination with partners, or funding.
28. We understand that a component of the LifeSet model is the use of a LifeSet team. Can someone please describe LifeSet's team structure?
 - a. In what ways does LifeSet's teaming structure support or hinder your ability to carry out the model?
 - b. How does this structure impact your work with specialists?

Reflection on LifeSet Services

Finally, I'm interested in your opinions about the LifeSet program.

29. Is there anything about LifeSet that you would like to change? If so, what is it?
30. What does the LifeSet program does well?
31. What could the LifeSet program improve upon?

Closing Questions

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

32. Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think I should know about LifeSet or your experience?
33. Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?

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