Services as Usual Youth Focus Group

Protocol for SAU Youth Focus Group

Hello everyone, welcome and thank you for joining today. We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group that will last about 90 minutes. We are going to discuss various topics today and are excited to hear your perspectives, ideas, and experiences. This focus group is part of the Young Adult Services Study (YASS) and we are interested in learning more about your experiences with services for young adults preparing to age out of involvement with the Division of Child Protection and Permanency. We will use this information to better understand the services young adults leaving foster care receive in New Jersey.

As a reminder, your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question or not participate in the focus group 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
Let's go around the room and begin by introducing ourselves. I'll start by introducing myself [facilitator gives name, position, and time at Urban]. **Can each of you please share:**
- Name, whatever you prefer to be called and preferred pronouns
- Age
- How long you have received services from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)

Thank you everyone for sharing.

Experience with transition-aged services
I'd like to start today by learning about the DCP&P programs or services youth may receive after turning 16 to help them as they become a young adult.

1. What programs or services are available to help youth prepare to age out of DCP&P services? We'd like to get a list going, and hear any examples from either your own experiences or what you've heard from others.
   a. [Examples to offer to kick things off if needed] Some examples we know of are life skills and PACES. Has anyone of heard of those? Yes? Are there other programs like those?
   b. [If not obvious for each program mentioned] What type of support does this program provide?
   c. Probe on specific services if not raised by participants:
      i. Is there help with housing? If yes, what kind of help? [Examples to use as probes: finding, paying for, staying in, advocating, advice etc.] What does someone in the program need to do to get that help?
      ii. Is there help with getting or keeping jobs? Yes? What kind of help? [Examples to use as probes: served as a reference, resume help, transportation, interview prep, clothing, etc.] Has anyone had a particular experience with that that they'd like to share?

        iii.   And what about help with school or training? [Examples to use as probes: starting, finishing, enrolling, paying for, applying, course advice, financial aid, campus visits, etc.]

        iv.   Is there help with parenting or childcare? What kind of help? [Examples to use as probes: diapers, crib or stroller, finding or paying for daycare, parenting advice, etc.]

2. Do people usually work with just one of these programs at a time? Or can someone be in multiple programs at the same time?
    a. [If multiple] Is it helpful to be in multiple programs at once or is it hard to manage? How is it helpful? What makes it hard?
3. Which programs or services are the most helpful? Which would you recommend to a friend?
    a. What made that program helpful? Why would you recommend it to a friend?
4. Which programs or services are the least helpful? Which would you tell a friend not to bother with?
    a. What made them unhelpful? Why wouldn't you recommend it to a friend?
5. If you were the one hiring people to work with youth preparing to leave foster care, what traits would you look for in that person?
    a. [Probe on specific examples/stories given] Why is [trait mentioned] important? How does it make someone a good service provider?
6. What negative experiences have people had with program or services staff? This can be your own experience or that you've heard from others.
    a. What traits are not helpful in a service provider?
7. We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Would you say the programs and services you received built upon your strengths or were they too focused on your weaknesses?
    a. Can someone give an example?

Experience with DCP&P services
Now I'd like to switch gears a bit talk about your experience as a young adult with DCP&P.

8. How often are you in contact with your DCP&P caseworker? Or, if you have aged out, how often were you in contact with them?
    a. Are (or were, if you've aged out) these contacts in person or virtual (such as text, video, phone call)?
9. What types of things do caseworkers do to help young adults in foster care?
    a. [Examples to offer if needed] Share information about services you can receive? Refer you to other programs? Help with needs like housing, education, parenting, etc.?
10. What traits make someone a good DCP&P caseworker?
11. What traits are not good for a caseworker to have?

Supportive Relationships
As we've just discussed, young adults have both successes and challenges when ageing out of DCP&P services. Having relationships with supportive adults may help young people during this time. We'd like to learn more about how DCP&P programs and services may, or may not, help young people build such relationships.

12. First, would someone be willing share how they would define what a supportive adult is? For example, who can be a supportive adult and what do they do?

       a. [If needed] Can it be a service provider, a friend, coworker, family member? Is a supportive adult different from a caseworker or other service provider?

       b. Do others agree with that definition? If not, what would you change or add?

13. How important is it for young people preparing to leave foster care to have relationships with supportive adults? Can you give a thumbs up if it is important, thumbs down if not important, and sideways if not sure?

       a. [If any thumbs up] Would someone who gave a thumbs up be willing to share why they think it's important to have relationships with supportive adults? Is that the same for others who gave a thumbs up?

       b. [If any thumbs down] Would someone who gave a thumbs down be willing to share why think it's not important? Is that the same for others who gave a thumbs down?

14. In your opinion, do any of the programs and services we've discussed today help youth build relationships with supportive adults?

       a. [If yes] Would someone be willing to share, based on your experience or what you've heard from others, how a program does this?

       b. [If no] Would someone be willing to share, based on your experience or what you've heard from others, how a program doesn't do this?

Experience in the Transition to Adulthood
The last few questions are about adulthood and becoming an adult. It's not always an easy time and often it can be hard and challenging.

15. What are some challenges you have experienced since turning 18 that you would warn your 15 or 16 year old self about if you could?

       a. [Probes if not mentioned] We talked earlier about housing, jobs, and education, have any of those been a challenge? For anyone who might be a parent, has parenting or finding childcare been a challenge? What about legal challenges or getting health care? Relationship challenges with friends, family, or significant others?

       b. [If not already covered] Did a program or service you received, or something you learned during them, help you overcome any of those challenges? In what ways?

16. And what kind of support has been most helpful as you've become a young adult?

17. What kind of support do you wish you'd had but didn't get?

18. We've covered a lot of ground on challenges, but there are positive experiences with becoming an adult, too. Looking back over the last year, could each of you name at least one accomplishment you are proudest of?

       a. [If needed] Accomplishments may be things like getting a diploma or certificate, getting a job, managing intense emotions like anger, learning to cook, getting a driver's license, or similar things.

       b. In what ways did DCP&P help you succeed in those areas?

19. What do you wish DCP&P knew about young adults preparing to age out of DCP&P services?

Closing
Thank you so much for your time today, it is much appreciated.

Is there anything that I didn't ask that you think is important for us to know?

Do you have any final questions for me about the study, or about the research team?