

Peer Group Focus Group Protocol



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Facilitator Guidelines

Thank you for joining us today. My name is [insert facilitator name] and I am part of the Center's Evaluation Team. We have asked you to join us to give your feedback on the services provided by the Capacity Building Center for the States in Peer Learning Groups. Your feedback will help us understand experiences accessing and engaging with peer groups and identify improvements for the future. A summary of our findings will also be shared with the Children's Bureau.

- Introduce leaders of the focus group and roles of each in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker).
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: As members of the Center's peer groups, we appreciate your participation in an evaluation designed to assess the overall effectiveness of the peer groups and to get a better understanding of your experience. Your participation in this focus group will provide valuable feedback about your experience with peer groups and help identify areas for improvement. Your contributions to this evaluation effort are extremely valuable and will be used to improve peer groups. There are no risks to you expected as a result of this session.
- Convey to each focus group participant our privacy policy: (1) the focus group is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time; (3) the information will be held in private by the evaluation team who have signed privacy agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group data will be maintained in password protected files on a secure server; (5) your name and individual comments will not be shared with other Center staff, or with others in your organization; and (6) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information discussed during the focus group outside of this focus group.
- Alert participants that we plan to record the focus group: We would like to record today's session to ensure we capture the discussion accurately and completely. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording and the transcript will not contain your names. If you are not comfortable with recording, you may drop off the call. An evaluation team member will follow up with you at a later time to schedule to participate in another focus group or to conduct a one-on-one interview to capture your feedback.
- Acknowledge that by continuing with the focus group, you are giving your verbal consent to participate in this evaluation activity. Ask if they have any questions before you begin.
- **PAUSE FOR 30 SECONDS**
- The notetaker should start the recording and tell the group the recording has started.

Questions

As always, we ask that we take turns and allow everyone a chance to speak, and that we respect one another's input in the discussion. We may call on you to invite you to speak but you can always "pass" if there is a question you don't want to answer.

Note to facilitator: *italicized questions* can be used as optional probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses.

1. Thinking about your overall experience with the peer groups in which you are a member, what are three words that come to mind that describe the peer group?
2. In which peer groups are you a member?
 - a. *Are you a part of any other peer groups? If so, which one(s)?*
3. How did you learn about the Center's peer groups?
 - a. *Why did you decide to participate in peer groups?*
 - b. *What keeps you interested or motivated to continue participating in peer groups?*
 - c. *What is the purpose/objectives of this peer group? How is the Center helping to define/achieve the group objectives?*
4. One of the goals of peer groups is to connect individuals doing similar work in child welfare agencies.
 - a. Do you engage with others during peer group events? What was the nature of these interactions?
 - i. *How do you make connections with other members?*
 - ii. *Can you give an example of how you engaged with other members during a peer group event?*
 - b. If you do not regularly engage with others during group events, why not?
 - i. *What challenges do you face that keep you from regularly engaging with others?*
 - c. Have you engaged with others from the peer group outside of group events? What was the nature of these interactions?
 - i. *Can you give an example of how you engaged with other members outside of a group event?*
 - d. Have you made new connections as a result of participating in this group? Can you give an example of how you engaged with those connections and any benefit to each of you?
5. Peer groups are designed to build the capacity of members to better support their work areas, through increased knowledge and skills of relevant topics. In what ways is the peer group helpful in your work?
 - a. *Can you share an example of topics in which you have increased your knowledge or skills through participation in peer groups?*
 - b. *What aspects of the peer group are most useful for your work?*
 - c. *What aspects of the peer group are least useful for your work?*
 - d. *What has been the benefit of your participation to you? What has been the benefit to your agency and colleagues?*
6. How do you apply what you learned in the peer groups to your work?
 - a. *Have you applied what you learned toward making program or policy improvements? Please provide an example.*
 - b. *Do you share what you learned with colleagues or clients/families?*
 - c. *Have you used what you learned to provide training to staff or colleagues?*
 - d. *Have you applied what you learned toward research/evaluation, fundraising or advocacy work, or to increase awareness or advocacy of a particular issue?*
 - e. *If not, what challenges or barriers do you face when applying what you learned in peer groups to your work?*

7. The Center produces a variety of products, resources and tools for child welfare professionals, and these resources are sometimes shared with peer groups. What specific tools or resources from peer groups have you found most relevant or helpful?
 - a. *What suggestions do you have for improving Center publications and products?*
 - b. *What topics would you like to see the Center develop resources on?*
8. What would make this peer group more valuable to you?
 - a. *What additional topics do you hope to learn about or discuss with peers?*
 - b. *What additional assistance or training do you or your organization need from this peer group?*
9. What types of technology are you finding most useful?
 - a. *Probe for – virtual spaces, virtual events, peer-to-peer communication*
 - b. *What kinds of technological support do you think would be helpful for your peer group in the future? What works well with these technology supports? What could be improved?*

This next set of questions relate to any of the Center for State’s efforts to promote engagement and partnership with individuals who have lived experience and/or lived expertise in this peer group. For the purposes of this interview, references to lived expertise and lived experience include individuals who have direct, firsthand experience with the child welfare system. Lived experience “can provide insight into patterns, common behaviors, challenges, and barriers among individuals who share similar experiences in the child welfare system.”¹ Lived expertise refers to “the unique ability to translate personal experiences in the child welfare system into meaningful system change. Developing lived expertise is a process that takes ongoing training, support, and skill building.”²

10. In what ways over the past year, if any, has the Center for States promoted the importance of lived experience and/or lived expertise in its delivery of services within this peer group?
11. To what extent do you agree that individuals with lived expertise were meaningfully engaged in this peer group (i.e., actively contributed and helped to inform decisions)? On a seven-point scale where 1= strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Somewhat Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)	Not applicable (individuals with lived expertise were not part of the peer group)
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- a. *What contributed to your response? Are there any (or where are) opportunities to improve?*
- b. *What are some examples of meaningful engagement you’ve observed within this peer group?*

This next set of questions relate to any of the Center for State’s efforts to infuse a racial equity approach into its service delivery. A racial equity approach refers to a deliberate approach to identifying the systemic and institutional structures, policies, and practices that produce disparate outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and people of color [and their] communities. This approach requires taking intentional steps to address these inequities.”³

¹ Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>

² Pauter, S. M., Dicharry, L., Cuza, H., Harvey, J., Hernandez, V., McDaniel, S., & Trochtenberg, R. (2019, July). Definition of partnership. In S. Pauter (Chair), Think tank on partnering with youth and young adults in child welfare. Symposium conducted at the Chadwick Center, San Diego, CA. <https://www.tipscenter.org/public/uploads/ckeditor/5e98837a743cf1587053434.pdf>

12. Overall, to what extent did your peer group experience increase your jurisdiction's capacity to incorporate a racial equity approach into your activities?

Probe: Can you provide any examples about how the peer group helped your jurisdiction use a racial equity approach?

Probe: How could Center's services related to racial equity better meet your jurisdiction's needs?

13. To what extent did the Center's peer group address racial equity (e.g., increasing capacity for interpreting data by race and/or ethnicity to understand populations and their needs, using data to understand gaps in and barriers to service delivery for families of color, increasing understanding of service needs for families and communities of color).

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Somewhat Disagree; 4=Neither agree nor disagree;
5=Somewhat Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree; 99=Don't Know

14. The Center's peer group focus on racial equity fit well with my agency's current efforts to infuse racial equity in our work.

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Somewhat Disagree; 4=Neither agree nor disagree;
5=Somewhat Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree; 99=Don't Know

[If Q14 score is 5=Somewhat agree or higher] Why do the services fit well?

[If Q14 score is 4=Neither agree nor disagree or lower] Why do the Center's services not fit well with your agency's current efforts?

15. What other types of Center support would help your peer group be successful?

16. Do you have any additional suggestions or feedback for improving peer groups?

³ Capacity Building Center for States (2023). Diversity, racial equity, and inclusion in child welfare: Terms and Definitions. <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/resources/rei-terms-and-definitions>