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Youth Focus Group Protocol

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November 2021

Youth Focus Group Protocol

NOTE: *This protocol is intended as a guide, not a script. The protocol has been developed to be used with youth participating in Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) programs.*

Introduction

Moderator and co-moderator introductions

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm, and we are here to learn about your experiences with [SRAE program name]. My name is [name], and my colleague is [name].

Explanation of project and purpose of group discussion and questionnaire

We are doing a study on classes like [SRAE program name]. During our discussion today, we are interested in learning about your impressions of these classes, the topics covered in class, and your interactions with the class teacher. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, but we will not use any of your names, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions. All information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Ground rules for discussion

Before we start our discussion, we want to give you some ground rules about how our time together will go:

- Participation in today's discussion is voluntary. That means you do not have to participate, and you can decide to stop participating at any point.
- The discussion will last about 45 minutes.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your participation today.
- To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We will be taking notes and audiotaping the session, but everything you say will be kept private. Does anyone object to us audiotaping the discussion?
- Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Questions

A. Introductions

1. Many of you may already know each other, but we would like to get to know you. Let's go around and have everyone share their first name. You do not have to give your name if you do not want to.

B. Program content and satisfaction

Let's start by talking about your experience with [SRAE program name].

1. How would you describe [SRAE program name] to someone your age whom you just met?
 - a. What do you think are the goals or purposes of these classes?
 - b. What topics or types of information have you learned?
2. Tell me your thoughts about how the teacher leads these classes and discusses the topics with you.
 - a. Is the teacher of this class able to answer questions from you or other students? How do you feel about the way the teacher answers questions from you or other students?
 - b. What did you like about how the teacher gave your class the information or conducted activities with your class?
 - c. What did you dislike about how the teacher gave your class the information or conducted activities with your class?
3. Tell me about the different types of topics that have been covered during your classes. What are topics that you remember learning about?
 - a. Thinking about the topics that were discussed in the classes:
 1. Were some topics easy to understand? Can you tell me about those topics?
 2. Were some topics difficult to understand or confusing? Can you tell me about those topics?
 3. What topics have been the most interesting?
 4. What topics have been the least interesting?

C. Overall reaction to facilitation strategies

Now, let's discuss what you learned from participating in these classes.

1. What do you think you've learned from these classes about managing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors?
 - a. How have these classes helped you [ADD SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, such as, understand yourself better, understand what you want for the future, be able to plan or take steps to achieve your goals, know what to do when you feel overwhelmed or upset, avoid sexual risk, know about sexual health and safety]?

2. Tell me whether you think this class will affect how you behave or the choices you will make in the future.
3. Do you think the classes have made you think about things differently than you did before the classes? For example, have the classes helped you with any of the following skills: [ADD SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, such as, managing time, improving communication skills, managing emotions, succeeding in school/career, building supportive friendships/romantic relationships]?

D. Satisfaction with program climate

Next, I'd like to discuss your impressions of the class environment. By this, I mean the mood or tone or the way it feels in this class.

1. Can you describe to me how the mood or tone feels in this class?
 - a. How much do you think the mood in the class depends on the teacher and how they lead the class? Tell me more about that. Can you give me some examples?
 - b. Tell me about what the teacher does to set the mood or tone in this class? For example, can you think of things the teacher does to help the class have a positive tone, or things they do that make the class have a negative tone?

Probe with examples, if needed, such as welcoming students by name, knowing students' interests or activities, setting ground rules, encouraging students to participate and listen to each other, encouraging students to identify and talk about their feelings, providing positive reinforcement.

2. To what extent are students interested and involved during these classes? For example, do they participate in class discussions or activities? Why or why not?
 - a. Do you feel like you personally had opportunities to be involved in class, such as by participating in discussions and activities, if you wanted to? Why or why not?
3. Do you look forward to coming to these classes? Why or why not?

E. Wrap-up questions

Thank you, your feedback has been very helpful. I have two final questions I would like to ask.

1. Is there anything else about [PROGRAM NAME] that you really like that we haven't talked about today?
2. Is there anything else about [PROGRAM NAME] that you wish you could change that we haven't talked about today?

Thank you for sharing your opinions and experiences with me today. This has been very helpful. Please contact me directly if there is anything you would like to discuss or if you have any concerns.