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## Youth Focus Group Guide

Thank you for joining our focus group. My name is <<name >>>, and I am <insert role>>. We also have with us <<insert name>>, who will be taking notes to make sure we capture the information provided today. We are interested in hearing more about your experience with the child welfare court system. I just want to remind you that participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can exit the meeting at any time, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Your responses will be kept private – that means that your name will not be connected to anything that you say in this group, and it will not show up in our report. I ask that you also respect the privacy of others in the group and do not share with anyone outside of our group what is said during the focus group.

We have the following rules for this group:

- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions today. Please speak from your experience.
- This is not a support group or a counseling session. If you need those services, we will be happy to connect you to them
- One person speaks at a time.
- Everyone has an opportunity to speak. I may ask someone who is talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk. I may also ask a person who isn't talking if they have anything to share. You can say no.

Are you still interested in participating in the group?

[IF NO: Thank you so much for considering participating. Have a great rest of your day!]

IF YES: Thank you! Let's begin ...

We are going to start by talking about your experience with the child welfare court process.

1. Where you ever invited to attend your child welfare court hearings? [1.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.9]
  - If yes, did you ever attend? [1.2]
  - Did you get to say the things you wanted to say at court? [1.6, 1.9, 1.13, 2.11]
  - Did you feel comfortable and safe at court? [1.6, 1.9]
  - Did you feel prepared for your court hearings? [1.9, 2.11, 3.6c, 3.9]
  - Was transportation available to you to be able to attend your hearings? [1.2, 2.9]
  - Were there youth-friendly spaces available to wait outside your court hearing? [1.6]

Now we would like to talk with you about your attorney. This could be an attorney, lawyer, or a guardian ad litem (GAL).

2. Did you have a lawyer or a GAL?
3. Did you have a positive relationship with your lawyer or GAL? [3.9]
4. Did you feel that your lawyer cared about you? [3.9]
5. Did your lawyer explain BEFORE court what would happen in court in a way you understood? [3.6, 3.6c, 3.9]
6. Did your lawyer meet with you AFTER court to explain what happened during the court hearing in a way you understood? [3.6, 3.6c, 3.9]
7. Did your lawyer listen to what you had to say? [3.6, 3.6c, 3.9]
8. Did your lawyer make sure that your wishes were heard in court? [3.6, 3.6b, 3.9]
9. Did you feel comfortable contacting your lawyer if you needed to? [3.6, 3.6c, 3.9]
10. Did your social worker and lawyer regularly ask you WITHOUT other adults present whether you felt safe at your current placement? [4.14]
11. Have you experienced any trauma or felt unsafe while in foster care? [4.2]
12. Did you have any physical health, mental health, or education needs that you wanted help with? If yes, did the court ensure you got the help you needed? [3.6b, 5.10, 5.16]
13. While in foster care, were you able to have regular visits (at least monthly) with family members, relatives, and siblings that you wanted to see? [5.7, 5.16]

We are almost finished with our questions. Just a few more.

14. What is one thing that would improve the court experience for other children/youth? [1.13, 2.11, 3.9, 4.14, 5.22]
15. What are three words to describe your court experience? [1.13, 2.11, 3.9, 4.14, 5.22]
16. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

That is all the questions we have for you today. Thank you for participating in this focus group!