

SCWS Evaluation: Grant Staff Focus Groups

TITLE: Strengthening Child Welfare Systems (SCWS) Evaluation

PROTOCOL NO.: None
IRB Protocol #

SPONSOR: Children’s Bureau, ACF DHHS

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Through its *Technical Assistance on Evaluation for Discretionary Grant Programs* contract with the Children’s Bureau (CB), James Bell Associates is tasked with conducting an evaluation of the Strengthening Child Welfare Systems (SCWS) grant cluster. The SCWS evaluation is designed to document the experience of the five SCWS grant recipients around the implementation of their projects and the degree to which they were able to address common child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

The purpose of this focus group is to collect information about your experience implementing your SCWS interventions in the last three years of the grant period (Oct 2020-Sept 2023). The information gleaned from these focus groups will provide the CB and the public with an understanding of factors

that influenced the implementation of SCWS interventions. The evaluation findings will include successes, challenges, and lessons learned related to the grant interventions and strategies, the contextual factors that affected implementation, and the degree to which grant recipients were able to address child welfare outcomes in their targeted locations.

The estimated length of this focus group is scheduled for 1.5 hours.

Participation by your project team in data collection efforts for the evaluation is a component of your federal grant. However, your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or leave the focus group at any time without penalty. You may decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer for any reason. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in the focus group. Your alternative is to not participate. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study and you will not be paid for participating in this focus group. However, your responses will help us learn more about the impact of the SCWS discretionary grant cluster and inform the field about effective child welfare interventions.

Your responses to this focus group will remain private.

During this focus group, a member of the study team will join the focus group to take notes. We would like to record our discussion so we can refer to it when writing up our notes. No one besides our study team will listen to the recording. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let us know and we will be glad to pause the recording. Focus group recordings will be transcribed and entered into a qualitative data analysis program (Dedoose) for review. We will destroy the recording once project reports are submitted to the Children's Bureau. Your answers will be stored in a secure folder and will only be accessible to the research team.

Your responses will not be associated directly with you but may be associated with the name of the grant and included in a report shared within the Children's Bureau and ACF and may be shared in public reports, articles, and presentations. Information from this study may be securely shared with qualified researchers to help guide future research and support program improvement.

If you have questions or concerns, or complaints about the survey or study, or to report a research-related problem, you may contact Co-Principal Investigators Elliott Graham, Nicole Miller, or Julie Murphy

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This research is being overseen by the WCG IRB. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at 855-818-2289 or researchquestions@wcgirb.com if:

- you have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- you are not getting answers from the research team.
- you cannot reach the research team.
- you want to talk to someone else about the research.
- you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: The described collection of information is voluntary and will be used to help us gather feedback about the implementation and impact of the SCWS discretionary grant. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average of 1.5 hours, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and participating in the focus group. 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 and expiration date for the described collection are **OMB #: xxxx-xxxx, Exp: xx/xx/20xx**. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Nicole Miller (miller@jbassoc.com) and Julie Murphy (murphy@jbassoc.com).

Verbal Consent

Do you agree to participate in this focus group?

Do we have your permission to record this conversation?

[Wait for the response. If respondent declines, the notetaker will still be taking notes]

[If respondent agrees, the interviewer asks the notetaker to start the recording]

The recording has started.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? [Answer any questions or concerns]

Before we begin with our questions, we want to highlight the guiding research questions that we hope to answer through this focus group.

- Were strategies implemented as intended? What were the contributors and inhibitors to implementing strategies with fidelity?
- What were the successes and challenges experienced by grantees during the implementation and sustainability phases of the grant (i.e., Years 3 to 5)?
- What was the effect of the SCWS strategies on short- and long-term child welfare outcomes?

In thinking about your responses to the following questions, please focus on Year 3, Year 4, and Year 5 (October 2020 to September 2023). If your site implemented more than one intervention under this grant, consider each intervention individually when responding to our questions.

PROCESS

1. Were your interventions implemented as intended? [*Probe: intervention adaptations, contributors, and inhibitors to implementing with fidelity*]
2. What are some of the biggest successes since your interventions have been fully implemented?
3. What are some of the biggest challenges or barriers since your interventions have been fully implemented?
4. How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact planned activities collaboration, communication, strategies, and outcomes?
5. What other contextual factors supported or inhibited the implementation and evaluation of your grant? [*Probe: child welfare workforce, staffing, child welfare/court partnerships*]
6. What Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) strategies did you implement? How did they strengthen or hinder implementation?
7. What were the biggest successes and challenges in evaluating your SCWS grant interventions?

IMPACT

1. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) had a particular interest in funding grants that focused on improving Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes with particular emphasis on permanency and adoption outcomes. Do you expect to see the impact of your grant efforts on each of the four following outcomes? Why or why not?
 - a. CFSR case review outcomes
 - b. CFSR systemic factors
 - c. Child welfare permanency outcomes
 - d. Child welfare adoption outcomes

2. Based on the initial goals and outcomes of interest you identified when you began implementation, do you believe your grant is meeting those goals and outcomes? What, if any, goals/outcomes have you not been able to meet and why?

OTHER

1. Sustainability: What components of your SCWS interventions will be maintained after October 2023? What will be discontinued?
2. Based on your experience with this grant in Years 3 through 5, what lessons did you learn that you would like to convey to CB?
3. [Ask if time allows] The Children's Bureau is especially interested in discretionary grant efforts that focus on CB priority areas. Did you incorporate any of these topics into your grant strategies or interventions? If so, how and what has been the impact?
 - a. Diversity, equity, and inclusion?
 - b. Lived expertise?
 - c. Fatherhood involvement?
4. Is there anything we have not discussed about the full implementation and sustainability of your grant that you would like to mention?