

# Appendix H: Family Interview Protocol

## Introductory Script

I am \_\_\_\_\_ and this is \_\_\_\_\_ from Child Trends. We are currently contracted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to do research to understand families' child care needs and preferences – particularly for families living in public housing. Child care, at a center or at a home, is an important service for families with young children and we'd like to talk to you for about an hour today about your experiences with child care. We will ask you about: your background; your child care arrangements; child care access; your experience with other early childhood services; and any financial supports you receive.

All of your responses and comments today will be kept confidential and will not be connected to your name in the products that we create as part of this project. If we include any quotes from interviews, we will make sure that any potentially identifiable information is removed. There is one exception to confidentiality we need to make you aware of. In research studies, it is our ethical responsibility to ensure everyone is safe. This means we are responsible for reporting current or previous situations where a child might have been seriously harmed by an adult; specifically: of child physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, child neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. Also, if we are concerned that anyone is at risk of harming themselves, we will want to connect you to supports to keep everyone safe. However, we are not seeking this type of information in our study nor will you be asked questions about directly these issues.

To keep track of everything that is being discussed today, we would like to record the conversation. The purpose of recording is to make sure that we are correctly capturing your responses in our notes. The recording and written notes from this interview will be kept on a secure server at Child Trends and no one outside of the research team will be able to access them. We will delete the recording once the notes are complete.

Would like to participate in today's interview?

Yes/No

Are you comfortable with us recording this interview today?

Yes/No

As we stated before, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of our questions—we are simply interested in hearing about your experiences. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, just let me know and we can skip it and move to the next one. **Please note that participating in this interview is completely voluntary. You may request to stop the interview at any time.**

As a reminder, you will receive a gift card to thank you for your time today. We will share more details about receipt of the gift card at the end of the interview.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Let's begin.

## 1 Background Information

[5 minutes]

1. We'd like to learn a little bit about you. Please share your name, how many children you have, and their ages.
2. Can you please describe your current housing arrangement?
  - a. *PROBES:*
    - i. Who else lives in your home and what is your relationship to those individuals?
    - ii. How many children in total live in your home?
3. How long have you been in this arrangement? How long do you expect to be in this arrangement?
4. What are your monthly housing costs? Please think about costs like rent, utilities, internet, etc.
  - a. If you had to guess, what percent of your total income are your housing costs?

**Transition:** Now we are going to transition to asking about your use of child care—at a center or at a child care home.

## 2 Child Care Arrangements

[15 minutes]

5. What are your child care needs this week? Are there times where you need someone other than yourself to care for your child(ren)?
  - a. Is this pretty typical for you, or do you needs change depending on the week?
    - i. [if yes to 7a] How do your needs change?
6. What child care arrangements are you using this week to meet these needs? This may include care provided by a family member, friend or neighbor, home-based child care, child care center, nursery school, pre-school, Head Start, Early Head Start, etc.
  - a. [*If there is co-located care*] We understand that [name of ECE program] provides onsite care to families in your development. Do you use services from this program?
    - i. [*If yes*] Why did you choose to use this program?
    - ii. [*If no*] Why did you not choose this program?
  - b. [*If yes to 7a*] Is this similar to arrangements you use other weeks when your schedule is different from this week?
  - c. [*If no to 7a*] Is this your typical child care arrangement(s) or do(es) it/they change depending on the week?
  - d. Overall, how would you rate the quality of current child care arrangement(s) on a scale from 1-5 (1 being poor, 3 being just okay, and 5 being great)? Please consider each arrangement individually.
7. [*If not using any non-parental care*] Is there a reason for why you are not currently using child care?
  - a. *PROBES:*
    - i. Cost
    - ii. Work schedule
    - iii. Location
    - iv. Other barriers
8. We understand the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted families' child care arrangements. In what ways, if any, has the pandemic affected your child care arrangement(s)?
9. On average, how much does it cost your family for [insert child care arrangement(s)]?
  - i. If you had to guess, what percent of your total income (including TCA, SSI, etc) per month are your child care costs?
10. Do you have any unmet child care needs or times when you wish you had access to child care but do not?

11. From your point of view, what are the biggest barriers to meeting the child care needs of parents/caretakers of young children living in public housing?
  - a. *PROBES:*
    - a. Lack of child care slots
    - b. Child care is not affordable
    - c. Child care is low-quality
    - d. Transportation
    - e. Lack of care during early mornings/evenings/weekends
12. Do you have a sense of whether these needs differ from other parents who do not live in public housing?

**Transition:** Next we're going to ask you some questions about how your current child care arrangement(s).

### 3 Child Care Access

[20 minutes]

[The following questions are only for families who indicated that they are currently using at least one child care arrangement.]

13. Tell me about how you found your current child care arrangement(s).
  - a. Did you have to have someone else help you to find care? If yes, who or what agency?
  - b. *PROBES:*
    - i. Did you hear about your current child care arrangement through a friend or neighbor?
    - ii. Did you receive a referral from a community service provider or Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency?
    - iii. Did you receive any support from your public housing development?
    - iv. Were there enough child care slots to meet your family's needs?
14. How long did it take to find child care?
  - a. Were you on a waiting list(s)?
  - b. Did you have to advocate for access to child care (keep going back, keep calling, or otherwise keep bugging someone to get service, did you have a special ally or someone who could pull strings to help with securing child care)?
  - c. What other support would have been helpful?
  - d. Did you feel like you had to "settle" for this particular arrangement or were you happy with the option(s) available?
15. Please explain why you chose care by a family member, in a child care center or home-based care?
  - a. *PROBES:*
    - i. Age of child
    - ii. Child's caretaking needs (e.g. special needs/disability, medical issues, etc.)
    - iii. Trust
    - iv. Safety
    - v. Cost
    - vi. Convenience (e.g., proximity, hours)

16. We know that child care helps families in a number of different ways. How does your child care arrangement help you?
- a. *PROBES:*
    - i. Did it allow you time or flexibility to find or maintain employment?
    - ii. Did it allow you time or flexibility to attend training or educational programming?
    - iii. Did it help you in meeting the needs of your family in other ways?
17. When you think about the location of your home, work, or school, are you satisfied with the location of your child care provider? Why or why not?
- a. How do you get to the provider?
  - b. How long does it take you to get to your child care provider?
  - c. Is there anything you would change about the location of your provider? Are there other providers that are more conveniently located to your home, work, or school that you are not using?
    - i. Why?
18. How do the summer months and/or school holidays and vacations impact your child care arrangements?
19. What are some characteristics or qualities of programs that you look for when you are searching for child care?
- a. *PROBES:*
    - i. Education quality/focus on learning
    - ii. Individual attention for child
    - iii. Hours of operation
    - iv. Cost
    - v. Location
    - vi. Cultural values
    - vii. Relationship/trust with caregivers/providers
    - viii. Reputation/reviews of provider
    - ix. Safety
    - x. Transportation access
20. How would you describe your ideal child care arrangement(s)?
21. [if site does not have co-located child care] Some public housing developments have child care onsite for residents. Is this something that you would be interested in if it was accessible to you? Why or why not?
- a. How would you want this arrangement to work? What would an ideal co-located child care/ housing situation look like?

**Transition:** *For this next questions, I am going to ask you about other types of early childhood services you might use.*

## **4 Experiences with other Early Care and Education or Social Service Agencies**

[5 minutes]

22. Sometimes children and families receive services from other agencies like early intervention or home visiting. Do you currently receive any other early childhood services for your child(ren)?

- a. Did your child care provider connect you to other agencies or services?
- b. What type of services were you or your child referred to? Did you receive the services you were referred to?

**Transition:** Next we'd like to learn about whether or not you have access to child care subsidies, or other financial support to offset the cost of child care.

## 5 Use of Financial Supports to Offset the Cost of Child Care

[10 minutes]

23. Earlier, you shared that you spend about [enter amount] on child care costs. Do you receive any financial supports to help cover the costs of this care?
- a. **PROBES:**
    - i. Child care subsidy
    - ii. No cost programs like Head Start or public pre-Kindergarten
24. *[If receiving financial supports]* How did you learn about and apply for this funding?
- a. Were there any resources or supports that made it easier for you to apply for this funding?
  - b. Did you face any barriers in applying for or receiving this funding?
  - c. In what ways, if any, did staff at your public housing development support you in applying for child care funding?
25. *[If not receiving financial supports]* Why did you not apply for this funding?
- a. **PROBES:**
    - i. Was not aware
    - ii. Not eligible
    - iii. Too difficult
    - iv. Applied and was rejected
26. When/if you filed for taxes in 2023, did you claim or receive:
- a. The Child and Dependent Care Credit?
  - b. The Child Tax Credit?
27. *[If receiving any of these credits]* How did you learn about this/these credit(s)?
- a. What was the process for claiming this/these credits?
    - i. Did you receive any supports in claiming this/these credit(s)?
    - ii. Did you face any barriers in claiming this/these credit(s)?

## 6 Closing Thoughts

[2 minutes]

28. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding your experiences using child care that you think is important, but we have not discussed?

**Closing script:** Thank you for your time. If for any reason, we need additional clarification about anything that was said is it okay of we follow up with you? You should also feel free to reach out to us if there's anything you remember that you'd like to share.