



**OMB Clearance Package**

**Study of Post-Disaster Outcomes of Renter Households and Rental Housing  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Community Development Block Grants - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)**

**Appendix G: Focus group protocol - Renters**

**DRAFT FOR HUD REVIEW**

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## **Appendix G. Focus group protocol - Renters**

**Informed Consent** [facilitator to read aloud and disseminate two copies of informed consent form to each participant for review and signature; see Appendix N for informed consent form]

### **Introduction/Purpose**

You are invited to take part in a research project to study disaster recovery outcomes for rental housing, renter households, and affordable housing residents. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a federal government agency, is paying for this study.

We (the research team) are talking with small groups of adults in your area to gather information about how [disaster name] affected housing and affordable rental housing and your perceptions about different recovery activities and programs in [community name] after [disaster name]. We are also interested in recommendations you might offer to HUD and other federal disaster recovery programs to improve rental housing in communities that are affected by disasters like [disaster name]. Before you decide to be a part of this study, you need to know the benefits and risks of joining the study.

### **Procedure**

You will be a member of a focus group. A focus group is a small group of people who are asked questions about a topic. The topic of this focus group is disaster impacts on rental housing, renters, and rental housing recovery after a disaster event. A researcher will lead the group and ask the questions. A researcher will keep track of your answers. The focus group will be audio recorded. If you don't agree to have the audio recorded, please let us know, and you will be excused from the group.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions. We are interested to learn about your perspectives and experiences. You don't have to answer all of the questions if you do not wish to, and you can choose to leave the focus group at any time. The focus group will last about 2 hours.

### **Benefits**

Your answers will contribute to research that will inform future program planning at HUD to reduce negative impacts on rental housing and renter populations in communities affected by disasters. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this focus group, but there are larger societal benefits.

### **Risks**

There are no known physical risks to you in taking part in this study. However, there is a small psychological risk that you will think some questions are sensitive or that they may elicit an emotional response. If any question makes you feel uncomfortable, you certainly don't have to answer it or participate in that part of the discussion. The research team will keep information you share during the focus group confidential.

### **Thanking you for your time**

Whether or not you take part in this focus group, you will receive a \$50 gift card. Refreshments will also be served during the focus group.

### **Confidentiality**

The research team will keep information that you share confidential as we develop notes and reports about the study. Our reports will not include your name or any other information that could be used to identify you. Recordings from the focus group will be stored in a secure digital folder that can be used by only the researchers in this study. Notes from the

focus group will be locked in an office. We guarantee the confidentiality of the notes and recorded information from the focus group, and will destroy recordings as soon as final de-identified notes are completed. If you agree to take part in this study, you must also agree to not share the names of or comments from other members of the focus group with people outside of the focus group.

### **Participation is Voluntary**

Your participation in this study, if you agree to take part, is voluntary. You have the right to stop your participation at any time without penalty. You also have the right to not answer any or all questions during the focus group. If you are uncomfortable with the audio recording, we understand, and we will excuse you.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this focus group, including those about your rights as a member of the study, please call the lead researchers at the Urban Institute, Daniel Teles or Sara McTarnaghan at [number] or the Institutional Review Board (202-261-5632). This review board oversees the protection of people who take part in research studies.

### **Agreement Statement**

Do you agree to take part in Urban Institutes' Study on disaster recovery outcomes for rental housing, renter households, and affordable housing residents?

### **Focus Group Questions**

*We have a few questions asking you to reflect back on the [main disaster event] and consider the immediate impacts and damages, focused on rental housing.*

#### **1. Tell us about your housing experiences in [community] after [disaster event] - how did the disaster affect housing in your community? How, if at all, was your housing affected?**

Probes: evacuation experience; physical damages to property; ability to return to unit; relationship with landlord during repair process

#### **2. What type of supports or resources did you - and other renters in your area - need immediately following the disaster? For example, short term-housing or hotel vouchers, clean up support, temporary financial assistance?**

#### **3. What was your experience of the quality and accessibility of these resources/supports for renters in your community immediately following the disaster? This could be from state and local governments, non-profits, churches.**

#### **4. Were there opportunities to communicate about your needs as renters as part of planning processes for recovery, such as CDBG-DR action plan? Were these spaces accessible to you to participate? Do you feel that the experiences and needs of renters were heard?**

*Let's move forward to about one year after the disaster...*

#### **5. In the year following the disaster, what if any changes did you observe in [community/region]'s rental housing market? For example, what kind of units were available for rent during this period and what shape were they in? Were they more expensive, less expensive, or about the same as before the [main disaster event]? Was it harder, easier, or about the same as before the [main disaster event] to find available units?**

**6. How would you describe who lived in rental housing about a year after the disaster? Was this different than before the disaster? Did a lot of people leave the community or were there a lot of new arrivals?**

**7. What was your experience of the quality and accessibility of these resources/supports for renters in your community about a one year following the disaster? This could be from state and local governments, non-profits, churches.**

*Let's shift gears to on the **longer-term, post-disaster recovery phase**.*

**8. How similar or different is the rental market from before the disaster? For example, what kind of units were available for rent during this period and what shape were they in? Were they more expensive, less expensive, or about the same as right before the [main disaster event]? Was it harder, easier, or about the same as before the [main disaster event] to find available units?**

Follow up: Do you think these changes were related to the disaster? What else might have affected rental housing availability and affordability in your community besides the disaster?

**9. Did notice differences in the type of people living in rental housing in your community about 5 years after the disaster compared to right before the disaster?**

Follow up: Do you think these changes were related to the disaster? What else might have affected who lived in rental housing in your community besides the disaster?

*To close, we'd like to ask about your recommendations—for other renters as well as local, state, and federal government officials—to improve recovery for people after disasters like [disaster name].*

**10. What do you consider important to support recovery for renters after a disaster like [main disaster event]?**

Probe: Think about things like availability of new housing, affordability of new housing, type of new housing, location of new housing, access to local, state and federal emergency and recovery resources...

Follow up: What lessons or insights would you offer to local decision makers, state, decision makers, and national decision makers to help renters after disasters?

**11. In your opinion, how well have your [community name] officials responded to the disaster, specifically in regard to housing and rental housing? Think about the short-term period (1 year afterward) as well as the long-term period (4-5 years afterward).**

Follow up: What about at the state level [or federal, if relevant]-level? in your opinion, how well would you say [agency names/levels] responded to the disaster?

Follow up: Overall, would you say recovery is adequate to needs of renters?

**12. How prepared do you feel [community/region] is for future disaster events like this in terms of rental housing and needs of renters? What does that preparedness look like or what would need to change for you to feel more prepared?**

**13. Anything else the group wants to add that we haven't already covered?**

[Thank you]