

Focus Group Guide

(After consent script)

WE ARE NOW GOING TO START THE DISCUSSION. ANY LAST QUESTIONS BEFORE WE START?

Icebreaker/general information gathering

1. Why did you join the military?

General Ship Life

2. Walk me through a typical day in the life of a Sailor assigned to <insert Command name>.

3. What do you wish someone had told you about working at <insert Command name> before you arrived?

3a. Prompt: What are some of the things that take the most time to get used to?

Stressors

4. What do you think are the largest sources of stress for Sailors assigned to your current command?

4a. Prompt: How do these differ while on deployment?

4b. Prompt: What are some ways Sailors typically deal with the stress?

5. In your experience, what are some specific things that are getting in the way of Sailors doing their jobs while assigned to <insert Command name>?

5a. Prompt: How do you think stress affects a Sailor's ability to do their job?

5b. Prompt: Are there issues getting the equipment or supplies you need to do your job? What about equipment/supplies, do you have what you need?

5c. Prompt: Are collateral duties or having to cover jobs that are outside your assigned duties causing stress for Sailors?

5d. Prompt: Do Sailors generally have their basic needs met, for things like food and working bathrooms?

5e. Prompt: What about work hours and work tasks?

6. What have been the most positive things about being assigned to your current command?

7. What types of things could improve morale?

Health and Wellness

8. Have you known Sailors who experienced mental health issues while assigned to your current command? **Note to interviewer: remind participants not to use names or identifying information here.**

8a. Prompt: How did you know they were struggling with those issues?

8b. Prompt: What did they do to help deal with those issues?

9. What are some of the mental health resources available to Sailors either on or off site?

9a. Prompt: What are some typical experiences with each of these resources?

9b. Prompt: In your opinion, which of these resources is the best or most effective? Which of these resources have not been effective, and why?

10. What are some of the reasons Sailors would not seek mental health help when they think they might need it?

Unit Cohesion

Note to interviewer: make clear that participants don't have to report incidents they personally experienced.

11. Do you feel that your current department has good unit cohesion? Why? Why not?

Definition of cohesion prompt: The sense to which you feel close and connected with the people you work with regularly.

11a. Prompt: What things are working well within your department/unit/shop to foster good working relationships and/or a sense of community?

11b Prompt: What types of changes would improve working relationships and/or your sense of community?

Leadership

12. What are some things your leadership is doing to influence cohesion and morale among Sailors in your current command?

12a. Prompt: What kinds of things would help improve your morale?

13. What are some positive things that leaders do to build trust and support communication with their subordinates?

14. How does your leadership communicate expectations and guidelines for success or failure?

Outside of Work Stressors

15. What are some sources of stress outside of work that Sailors experience while assigned to <insert Command name>?

15a. Prompt: What about financial issues?

15b. Prompt: What about work-life balance?

15a. Prompt: What about maintaining relationships with family and/or friends?

15a. Prompt: What about issues with a spouse or partner?

15a. Prompt: What about childcare issues?

Closing

In closing, we'd like to ask you for your opinion about things that could improve the health, wellbeing, or readiness of Sailors while they are assigned to your current command.

16. Realistically, what can your direct leadership do to improve the health and readiness of Sailors in your current command?

17. Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to tell us about life while assigned to your current command, specifically?

17a. Prompt: Is there anything that you feel is important for people who have never been working in this command to know?

18. Now that we have discussed a lot of aspects of work, we ask that you write down some final feedback for us on notecards: on the front of the card please write down what you think are the 3 biggest sources of stress while assigned to your current command. On the back of the card, please write 3 ways you think your leadership could realistically address the sources of stress.