**Family Focus Group Protocol[[1]](#footnote-3)**

The purpose of this study is to explore how family voice and leadership activities are implemented in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. 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 control number for this information collection is 0906-XXXX and it is valid until XX/XX/202X. This information collection is voluntary. Data will be kept private to the extent allowable by the law. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average X hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to HRSA Information Collection Clearance Officer, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 14N39, Rockville, Maryland, 20857 or [paperwork@hrsa.gov](mailto:paperwork@hrsa.gov). Please see <https://www.hrsa.gov/about/508-resources> for the HRSA digital accessibility statement.

## Introduction

Hello, thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. My name is [NAME] and I work at Child Trends, a research organization focused on improving the lives of children and families. We are working on a project funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, or HRSA, to learn about family voice and leadership activities in home visiting programs across the country. By “family voice and leadership,” we mean opportunities for families to be included in decision making about their home visiting program beyond their own personal visits, for example on things like policies, evaluations, or implementation efforts. Specifically, we are hoping to learn about the types of family voice and leadership opportunities available, families’ experiences participating in these opportunities, and what impact family leaders may be having on home visiting. As part of our project, we will be hearing from home visiting leaders, program staff, and family leaders like you through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. We will analyze what we learn to identify key themes and develop recommendations for the home visiting field on how to better engage in family voice and leadership activities.

Before we get started, I wanted to share some of our expectations for this discussion.

* As the facilitator, I’ll be asking you questions. However, our goal is to start a discussion between all of you, and you should feel free to respond directly to one another. I might interrupt the conversation to ask you to clarify something or move us on to another topic.
* It is up to you to share as you feel comfortable. You don’t have to answer any questions you don’t want to or that you don’t remember the answer to, and you can leave at any time.
* There are no right or wrong answers! Everyone here today comes from a variety of backgrounds and you may have different experiences or opinions, which we want to hear and understand.

Your decision on whether to participate in this discussion today will not have any effect on your participation in your home visiting program or as a family leader.

We will take every precaution to keep what you share here today as confidential as possible. Because this is a focus group with many people, we cannot guarantee confidentiality, but we do ask that you not share with anyone outside this group what you hear today so that everyone can feel more comfortable participating. We will not share your name, the name of your home visiting program, or any other information that could identify you with anyone outside the study team, including HRSA.

We will take notes and record our discussion today so we don’t miss anyone’s important comments. We will use the recording to fill in our written notes, and it will not be shared with anyone outside our team. At the end of our project, the recording will be destroyed.

Are you still willing to participate in our focus group today and be recorded?

Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

## Introductions

* Please share your name, where you’re located, and how you first became involved in home visiting.

## Experiences with Family Voice and Leadership Activities

* How did you become involved in family voice and leadership activities in your home visiting program? By family voice and leadership activities we mean opportunities to be included in decision making about your home visiting program beyond your own personal visits, for example on things like policies, evaluations, or other elements of the overall home visiting program.
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *How did you find out about these activities?*
    - *What made you decide to participate?*
    - *What types of things were you hoping to change or influence, if any?*
* Thinking about your first time participating in a family voice and leadership activity, what was that experience like? For example, the first time you participated in an advisory council, attended a leadership training, or participated in a home visiting staff meeting.
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *Was this your first time participating in something like this?*
    - *How comfortable or uncomfortable did you feel?*
    - *How were you treated by others participating (e.g., staff, other parent leaders)?*
* What has your experience as a family leader in your home visiting program been like since then? What types of opportunities/activities have you been involved in?
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *Has this felt like the right level of involvement, or would you prefer to be more or less involved?*
    - *What has been your role in these opportunities? Did you have any power to make decisions as part of these opportunities?*
    - *What projects or topics have you been most involved in consulting on?*
    - *Are there projects or topics that you would not want to be consulted on as a family leader? Why?*
    - *Are there projects or topics that your home visiting program has not wanted you to consult on? Did this limit make sense to you, or is it something you pushed back on?*
    - *Beyond your own personal experiences, in what ways do you bring in or represent the voices of other families in your home visiting program? In what ways do you do this?*

## Impact of Family Voice and Leadership Activities

* If you had to tell a friend about how your involvement in these activities has made a difference in your life, what would you say?
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *What have you learned through your involvement in family voice and leadership?*
    - *How have you grown personally and/or professionally?*
    - *What other opportunities have you had access to?*
    - *What drawbacks to participating in these activities have you experienced, if any?*
* Beyond these changes in your own life, what changes have you seen in your home visiting program as a result of your involvement and input?
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *What are examples of times when the program seemed to really value your input? How did they communicate that to you?*
    - *What are examples of times when the program did not seem to value your input? Why do you think that was?*
    - *What are examples of projects you’ve worked on where your involvement hasn’t led to any changes at all? Why do you think this was?*

## Facilitators and Barriers of Participation in Family Voice and Leadership Activities

* What supports from your home visiting program have made it possible for you to participate as a family leader in your home visiting program?
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *Probe for: Child care, transportation, devices (e.g., laptops, tablets), meals, interpretation supports, translated materials, appropriate literacy levels, convenient scheduling, convenient locations, virtual activities, internet connectivity, flexible participation, adequate family representation at meetings and events*
    - *Of these supports, which have been most helpful for you?*
    - *What challenges have you faced participating in family voice and leadership activities? What additional supports would help you overcome these challenges?*
    - *What supports do you feel are critical for families to be able to do this work?*

## Recommendations

* What advice would you have for home visiting programs that want to begin or strengthen their work with family leaders and how they incorporate families’ perspectives?
  + *Example probes:* 
    - *If a program was struggling to attract or retain family leaders, what would you advise them?*
    - *What questions should programs be asking themselves? What kinds of things should they be putting in place?*

## Closing

* Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Thank you for your time today! In appreciation of your time, we will send each of you a $50 e-gift card to Amazon or Walmart.

1. Note that this protocol is intended to serve as a guide rather than a script. Moderators will tailor questions and probes as needed to further explore experiences shared by focus group participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)