

Focus group: Caregivers of SWTCIE Participants

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is _____, and I work for Mathematica, an independent research firm. I'm joined by my colleague _____, who will be taking notes. Mathematica has been contracted by the US Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration to conduct the national evaluation of the Disability Innovation Fund Demonstration's Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment projects, which is referred to as the [grantee-specific project name] in your state. The goal of the evaluation is to learn about participants' experiences using services through [grantee-specific project name] that will help them achieve competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment is work in the community where people with disabilities earn a similar wage and benefits as employees without disabilities that do the same work. As the caregivers of participants enrolled in this project, I'd like to hear your perspectives on the services provided through the [grantee-specific project name] and your suggestions for improving services and supports.

The personally identifiable information (PII) requested on this form is collected as authorized by Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, P.L. 117-103 Rehabilitation Services, March 15, 2022. The researchers conducting this study follow the confidentiality and data protection requirements, as required by law. Your responses will be kept private and used only for research purposes. Your responses will be combined with the responses of other respondents and no individual names will be reported. While there are no direct benefits to participants and participation is voluntary, your participation will help us learn how states can help increase employment for people with disabilities. While your information will not be disclosed outside of the Department, there may be circumstances where information may be shared with a third party, such as a Freedom of Information Act request, court orders or subpoena, or if a breach or security incident would occur affecting the system, etc.

We would like this to be an open and lively discussion. I encourage you to share your honest views and examples from your direct experience. When doing so, we ask that you refrain from using people's actual names, such as participants and family members, during our discussion. We also ask that you do keep everyone's comments confidential, and refrain from sharing what you hear with others outside of this group. We expect this discussion to take about an hour and a half.

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Ground rules

Before we begin, let me briefly explain how this discussion will work:

1. **[If there is more than one attendee.]** Please speak one at a time and avoid side conversations so I can hear what you have to say.
2. You're welcome to speak directly to one another (you don't always have to talk to me) and respond to what others are saying, whether you agree or disagree. As you do, please be courteous and have respect for what other people say.
3. I'm interested in hearing your views based on your own personal experiences; there are no right or wrong answers. You're welcome to share specific examples from your loved one's or your own direct experience to support a point, but please avoid using actual complete names or other identifying information. I encourage everyone to speak and say what's on their mind.
4. **[If there is more than one attendee, and any are virtual attendees.]** To make sure everyone has a chance to speak, I will check in periodically with anyone joining by [phone/video] to give them an opportunity to share their thoughts.
5. **[If there is more than one virtual attendee on the phone.]** Please give your name the first couple of times you speak so that I can begin to identify you by your voice.
6. I am not an expert on employment services and cannot give advice. I am here to listen to your experiences and ask clarifying questions along the way.

Does anyone have any questions before we get started?

I would like to record the discussion to make sure I do not miss anything you share. The notes and recording will be used for notetaking only and will not be shared with anyone outside the study team. Are you comfortable with recording this conversation?

[If participants consent:] I will turn on the recording now, but let me know if you would like me to stop recording at any time.

For our records, can you please indicate your consent to participating in this discussion by stating "I consent to participating"?

Use these prompts to generate in-depth discussion.

Understanding of the SWTCIE project, its goals, and services offered
/ Information received about the SWTCIE project

- / Perceived goals of the SWTCIE project
- / Expectations for enrollment in the SWTCIE project

Motivations for family member/ care recipient's enrollment

- / Motivation to enroll in the SWTCIE project

Perceived barriers to employment

- / Concerns with their family member/loved one enrolling in the SWTCIE project
- / Perceived barriers to family member/loved one seeking competitive integrated employment
- / Perceived gaps in SWTCIE services and supports

Satisfaction with SWTCIE project

- / Overall satisfaction levels with SWTCIE project
- / SWTCIE project features that most help participants to prepare for or secure CIE
- / SWTCIE project features that could be improved
- / Extent to which services help family member/friend reach employment goals

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