

Listening Session Semi-Structured Instruments

Instrument 1 – Residential Fathers Semi-Structured Listening Session Instrument

Intro: Thank you for attending today’s listening session. We expect this focus group to take 1.5 hours and we look forward to hearing your feedback. The overall goal of our listening sessions is to learn more about how living in rural or surrounding communities impacts parents and human service delivery. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. However, we greatly appreciate you sharing your experiences to inform our efforts to develop strategies and services to better meet your needs. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the lived experiences of residential fathers. There will be an audio recording to create a transcript and analyze the information that you share. We will keep all information here shared private. We ask that you do not share information outside of this conversation.

Findings will be reported in a qualitative summary on the listening sessions, which ACF will publicly publish, and in a presentation for internal use by ACF program offices and managers. ACF intends to use the information to inform approaches to providing grants, services, and technical assistance to meet the needs of rural communities and to increase father involvement in ACF programs.

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If you have questions or comments on this data collection, please contact Chad Sawyer by email at chad.sawyer@acf.hhs.gov.

1. Tell me about yourself: how old you are, how many kids do you have, how long have you been a father.
2. Describe what it’s like to be a father who lives in a rural community. What are the benefits and challenges?
3. What resources do you have in your community that help you be a parent?
4. Talk about your experience co-parenting.
5. Tell me about a time when you’ve sought help. Who did you speak with and what was your experience?
6. Tell me about a time when you needed help but didn’t seek it. What did you do and how did you cope with the issue or situation?
7. Tell me about your experience with case workers and service providers. How have they treated you? What was the outcome?

8. If organizations or the government want to develop a communications campaign to target fathers in rural communities, what are your recommendations for them? What should they do to reach you, particularly since you live in a rural community?
9. How do you find information that you need? Who are the trusted people that you speak with in your community?
10. Talk about your relationships with family, friends, or coworkers and how they help or hinder you as a father.
11. What helps you be resilient and overcome the challenges of being a father living in a rural community?
12. What services and resources do you use to help you be a parent?
13. What services do you need that aren't available?
14. How can social service programs like TANF, Head Start, child care, or child support better support you as fathers living in rural communities?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Instrument 2 – Fatherhood Service Providers Semi-Structured Listening Session Instrument

Intro: Thank you for attending today’s listening session. We expect this focus group to take 1.5 hours and we look forward to hearing your feedback. The overall goal of our listening sessions is to learn more about how living in rural or surrounding communities impacts parents and human service delivery. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. However, we greatly appreciate you sharing your experiences to inform our efforts to develop strategies and services to better meet your needs. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the lived experiences of organizations providing services to fathers. There will be an audio recording to create a transcript and analyze the information that you share. We will keep all information here shared private. We ask that you do not share information outside of this conversation.

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1. Please describe the work your organization does with fathers living in rural communities.
2. What are their assets? How are they resilient?
3. What are their barriers and challenges?
4. How do they engage staff?
5. How do they participate in and respond to services?
6. Tell me about your communication strategies for fathers living in rural communities.
7. Tell me about your recruitment and retention strategies for fathers living in rural communities.
8. Tell me about any father-centric approaches or policies that you use.
9. Tell me about your experience providing services to rural communities.
10. What are the assets and challenges of providing services in rural communities?
11. What policies changes are needed to help make service delivery better, more efficient, and effective?

12. What flexibilities do you need to help provide services to fathers living in rural communities?
13. Tell me about your experiences applying for federal grants as an organization that provides services to rural communities.
14. How can the grant process be improved to better meet the needs and challenges of your organization and the fathers you serve?
15. Tell me about your experience implementing fatherhood grants.
16. How can the fatherhood grants be improved to better meet the needs and challenges of your organization and the fathers you serve?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Instrument 3 – Mothers Semi-Structured Listening Session Instrument

Intro: Thank you for attending today’s listening session. We expect this focus group to take 1.5 hours and we look forward to hearing your feedback. The overall goal of our listening sessions is to learn more about how living in rural or surrounding communities impacts parents and human service delivery. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. However, we greatly appreciate you sharing your experiences to inform our efforts to develop strategies and services to better meet your needs. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the lived experiences of mothers raising children with or without a father in the home. There will be an audio recording to create a transcript and analyze the information that you share. We will keep all information here shared private. We ask that you do not share information outside of this conversation.

Findings will be reported in a qualitative summary on the listening sessions, which ACF will publicly publish, and in a presentation for internal use by ACF program offices and managers. ACF intends to use the information to inform approaches to providing grants, services, and technical assistance to meet the needs of rural communities and to increase father involvement in ACF programs.

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1. Tell me a little about yourself and your children.
2. Talk about your experience being a mother living in a rural community.
3. What resources or networks do you have in your community?
4. Do you receive services from TANF, Head Start, child care, LIHEAP, or child support? If so, talk about your experience applying for and receiving those services.
5. What was your experience with caseworkers and frontline staff?
6. What changes are needed to make those programs better meet the needs of you and your children?
7. Talk about your experience raising your children with or without their father in the home.
8. What challenges or barriers do you face as a mother?
9. How do you deal with or overcome these challenges or barriers?
10. What mental health issues do you face? How do you cope with stress or feeling depressed, isolated, or lonely?
11. Talk about your experience coparenting with the father.

12. What role does the father's family play in helping you raise your children? For example, what is the relationship and experience with the children's paternal grandparents and relatives?
13. When you need help, what do you do? Who do you ask? How do you find information?
14. What happens when you don't get the help you need? What do you do?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Instrument 4 – Parents/Caregivers of Special Needs Children Semi-Structured Listening Session Instrument

Intro: Thank you for attending today’s listening session. We expect this focus group to take 1.5 hours and we look forward to hearing your feedback. The overall goal of our listening sessions is to learn more about how living in rural or surrounding communities impacts parents and human service delivery. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. However, we greatly appreciate you sharing your experiences to inform our efforts to develop strategies and services to better meet your needs. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the lived experiences of parents and caregivers of special needs children. There will be an audio recording to create a transcript and analyze the information that you share. We will keep all information here shared private. We ask that you do not share information outside of this conversation.

Findings will be reported in a qualitative summary on the listening sessions, which ACF will publicly publish, and in a presentation for internal use by ACF program offices and managers. ACF intends to use the information to inform approaches to providing grants, services, and technical assistance to meet the needs of rural communities and to increase father involvement in ACF programs.

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1. Tell me a little about yourself and your children.
2. Talk about your experience being a parent or caregiver of special needs children.
3. What are the triumphs and challenges?
4. How do you deal with or overcome these challenges or barriers?
5. How does living in a rural community impact being a parent or caregiver of special needs children?
6. What resources or networks do you have in your community?
7. What are the resources that you need but don’t have at all or enough of?
8. If applicable, talk about your experience coparenting special needs children. What are the assets and challenges that you experience coparenting?
9. If you receive TANF, Head Start, child care, LIHEAP, child support or any other services, tell us about your experience applying for and receiving those services.
10. What was your experience with caseworkers, schools, government, and frontline staff?

11. What changes are needed to make those programs better meet the needs of you and your children?
12. What, if any, physical and/or mental health issues do you face? How do you cope with stress, pain or feeling depressed, isolated, or lonely?
13. When you need help, what do you do? Who do you ask? How do you find information?
14. What happens when you don't get the help you need? What do you do?
15. What policy changes are needed to help parents with special needs children?
16. What recommendations do you have to ensure the government obtains the feedback of parents with special needs children?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Instrument 5 – Families with Incarcerated Fathers Semi-Structured Listening Session Instrument

Intro: Thank you for attending today’s listening session. We expect this focus group to take 1.5 hours and we look forward to hearing your feedback. The overall goal of our listening sessions is to learn more about how living in rural or surrounding communities impacts parents and human service delivery. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip questions you do not want to answer. However, we greatly appreciate you sharing your experiences to inform our efforts to develop strategies and services to better meet your needs. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the lived experiences of families with incarcerated fathers. There will be an audio recording to create a transcript and analyze the information that you share. We will keep all information here shared private. We ask that you do not share information outside of this conversation.

Findings will be reported in a qualitative summary on the listening sessions, which ACF will publicly publish, and in a presentation for internal use by ACF program offices and managers. ACF intends to use the information to inform approaches to providing grants, services, and technical assistance to meet the needs of rural communities and to increase father involvement in ACF programs.

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1. Tell me a little about yourself and your children.
2. Tell me about your community and where you live.
3. What community resources do you use?
4. Tell me about your relationships with family and friends, especially how they help support you in raising your children.
5. Talk about how you cope with stress and setbacks.
6. How do the children cope with stress and setbacks?
7. What are the challenges and barriers that you and your children face?
8. How has the incarceration of the father impacted you and the children?
9. Are there specific mental health, academic, financial, or job challenges that you or your children face due to the incarceration of the father?
10. What unmet needs do you have?
11. What specific services and organizations have helped you and your children?
12. How can these services be improved?

13. Does the incarcerated father have contact with his children? If so, please describe the contact and frequency.
14. Do the children have contact with the incarcerated father's family (their paternal grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)?
15. What policy changes are needed to help improve the situation for families and children of incarcerated fathers?
16. What recommendations do you have to get the input of parents and children dealing with the impacts of incarcerated fathers?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share?