

CHAFEE STRENGTHENING OUTCOMES FOR TRANSITION TO ADULthood (CHAFEE SOTA)

Sample Youth Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. My name is --- and this is ---. We are researchers from Westat, an independent research firm located in Rockville, MD / the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, Department of Pediatrics, School of Medicine University of Colorado]. We are working for the Administration for Children and Families (also known as “ACF”) to learn about how [PROGRAM] serves youth/young adults who are transitioning out of foster care.

We especially want to learn from your experiences and hear your ideas on:

- What services you have received from [PROGRAM],
- why particular services and supports work or do not work, and
- what could be done to better meet your needs.

You are the experts on how [PROGRAM]’s services meet or don’t meet your needs, and we are looking forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas. Your input will help improve programs like [PROGRAM] that support youth/young adults transitioning out of foster care across the country.

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Before we begin, I want to summarize the consent form we just reviewed with you.

To summarize:

- Everything you tell us today is private, which means we will not share your name with anyone who is not working on this project. Since today’s discussion is private, please don’t talk outside this room about what was said here today. If you do not want to use your real name, you can use any name you want.
- Being here is voluntary. You don’t have to answer every question. We do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point, however, you do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. If you don’t want to answer, you can just say ‘Pass’.
- There are no known risks to your participation today. Nothing you say today will affect the services you are receiving. Your input will help others who may be in the same situation as you are.

- Your name will not be associated with any of your responses, though we may include quotes that you provide in our reports. If there is anything that you do not want to be quoted, please let us know.
- We would like to record our conversation today, but that's just for note-taking purposes so we don't have to write everything down. The recording will be destroyed after it is transcribed. Do we have your permission to record the conversation?

Also, some other things I want to point out:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Our purpose for conducting this focus group is to hear what you think, so please speak up, especially if what you have to say is different than what someone else is saying.
- That said, please try not to interrupt anyone. It makes it difficult to hear what you are saying.
- Feel free to leave, help yourself to the snacks, or take a break whenever you need to. The bathrooms are [location].
- This discussion will last about an hour and a half.
- We have a lot to cover and I want to make sure we respect your time, so I may need to redirect the conversation at various points or move on from a topic. This is not because we're not interested in what you have to share, but just because we have so much to get through, and we want to hear as much as we can from everyone. I appreciate you understanding.

Does anyone have any questions for me before we get started? **[NOTE AND ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.]**

I know we've agreed to have this session recorded, but if something comes up that you would like to have off the record, please let me know and I can turn off the recorder.

[NOTETAKERS: DO NOT TAKE ANY NOTES DURING THESE OFF THE RECORD COMMENTS.]

A. Introduction

[FACILITATOR and NOTETAKER: INTRODUCE YOURSELVES FIRST.]

Okay, let's get started. Please introduce yourself – with whatever first name you would like to use, age, and how long you have been connected with [PROGRAM].

B. Introduction to Program

1. How did you first get connected to [PROGRAM]?
Probe: Case worker or another adult? Friends or other youth/young adults in a similar situation? Did an outreach worker contact you first?
2. What convinced you to start working with [PROGRAM]?
Probe: Staff? Services? Other Youth/Young Adults?

C. Services and Supports

3. What kinds of services and supports have you received through [PROGRAM]?

Have you received:

- Education help?
- Employment help?
- Housing help?
- Case management?
- Transportation help?
- Help connecting with health or mental health or drug and alcohol services?
- Financial support?
- [If parenting] parenting classes? child care?
- Things like food stamps, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infant and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or legal services?

When appropriate, ask for each:

- Can you describe the assistance you received?
- Who gave you the help? Case worker? Coach or Mentor? Volunteer? Someone else?
- How often did you connect with this person?
- What needs did it help?
- How and how much did it help?

4. What help have you needed but not received through [PROGRAM]?

Probe: What could have made things easier for you to get the help you needed? Why didn't you get this help (e.g., service unavailable, service had wait list, did not qualify [probe why], [PROGRAM] did not understand need)?

5. How much control has [PROGRAM] given you over the services and supports you receive?

Probe: Mostly your decision? Mostly decision of coaches, mentors, caseworkers, etc.? Balance of your decisions and those of others in [PROGRAM]?

D. Youth/Young Adult Leadership

6. Is [PROGRAM] guided by a youth advisory board or other young adult-led body?

[If yes]:

- What kinds of input does the board provide?
- How responsive is [PROGRAM] to input from the board?
- How are members selected? How many are there?
- Are you part of the board? Why or why not?
- How could the board be improved?

[If no]: Why not?

Probe: Don't think it has been considered? Lack of interest from [program] leadership, staff, or youth/young adults? Resistance from [program] leadership, staff, or youth/young adults?

E. Current and Ideal Program

7. Do you think the current [PROGRAM] is meeting the needs of youth/young adults transitioning out of foster care? What are the key gaps? What do you see as the major problems that need to be addressed?
8. How well does [PROGRAM] serve the following groups of youth/young adults transitioning out of foster care? How could it serve them better?
- **Youth/young adult who are not United States citizens**
 - **Youth/young adult who do not speak fluent English**
 - **Youth/young adult who are pregnant or have children**
9. If you were in charge of [PROGRAM], what services and supports would you keep? What parts would you remove, add, or change?

CLOSING

Thank you all so much for your time and for your helpful comments. This discussion really helps us understand how programs like [PROGRAM] can help youth/young adults transitioning out of foster care.

Before we close, do you have any questions for us?

[ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. NOTE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES.]

Thank you again.

[MAKE SURE THAT PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE PAYMENT AND SIGN RECEIPTS.]