

## Youth and Parent Voices for Research Study

### Instrument 3: Focus Group Guide for Youth Ages 15-17 – Topic Set 1

#### Introduction

Good afternoon! My name is [FACILITATOR'S NAME AND PRONOUNS] and I am a researcher at RTI International. RTI is an independent, nonprofit research institute. RTI is leading a project paid for by the Administration for Children and Families or ACF. The project is called *Reimagining the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being*. I'm joined by [CO-FACILITATOR'S NAME] from [CO-FACILITATOR ORGANIZATION].

Everyone's privacy is very important to us. Before we start, I want to remind everyone to please make sure you are in a private place where no one else can hear our conversation and that you feel comfortable talking openly.

Can we go around and have the folks who are on right now introduce yourselves and tell us one fun fact about yourself, if you're comfortable doing so I'll start and then pick the next person. My name is [NAME] and I [fun fact]. [Be sure all participants introduce themselves by name].

Thanks, everyone for sharing!

I'm going to get us started by talking about why we are here.

#### Purpose of the research

As I mentioned, we work on a project called *Reimagining the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being*, or NSCAW. NSCAW studies child and family well-being for folks who have been impacted by Child Welfare System. *Reimagining NSCAW*, the project we are talking about, is focused on research activities to better inform how we collect data. We are adults and may not always understand how young people talk about things. A lot of the times, researchers are guilty of "adultism" which means that we sometimes assume that we "know better" than young people. And that's why we have you here. You are our experts. We have you here today to hear your thoughts and opinions. We want to make sure that we are asking for the right information. We also want to ask about it in a way that other youth will understand.

Your life experiences, experiences with Child Welfare System, and your views and opinions are considered expert knowledge that will shape how we collect information in the future. And that's important. Please be honest and know that we are not judging you or what you say. All of it is valuable and helpful.

Has anyone taken part in a focus group? [PAUSE]

Some of you may be familiar with focus groups, but for those of you who are not, let's take a moment to review what a focus group is and how it works.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) STATEMENT OF PUBLIC BURDEN: The purpose of this information collection is to gather feedback to inform future National Survey of Child and Well-Being data collections. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per focus group, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. This is a voluntary collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB # is #0970-0356 and the expiration date is 01/31/2027. If you have any comments on this collection of information, please contact Melissa Dolan: [mdolan@rti.org](mailto:mdolan@rti.org).

### **Guidelines and rules**

A focus group is a small group of unrelated people (that's each of you) formed and led by one or two assistants, *[that's me and [CO-FACILITATORS NAME]]*, in a group discussion about a topic or topics. As the focus group assistant, I will be asking the group some questions for about 2 hours. I may read something or show you something and then ask what you think about it. If you are comfortable doing so, please turn your video on. Just like in a classroom, if you've got something you'd like to say, please raise your hand. You can do this using the "raise hand" function on Zoom or you can just raise your hand on the video until I get to you. We'll only speak one at a time, so please wait to be called on before you speak. You may also share information using the chat feature in Zoom.

We are going to speak to each other respectfully. At some point, you might hear something that you don't agree with. Please don't interrupt the person you disagree with. Instead, raise your hand and tell us what you think once you've been called on. Speaking respectfully also means no name calling or making fun of anyone.

We don't expect you to have thoughts or an answer for everything that we talk about today. It's OK if you don't know or don't have an opinion about something; if you feel that way, just let us know. That's important information too. If something makes you sad or feel uneasy and you don't want to answer, that's OK too. Your decision to participate is your choice. If you would like to stop participating for any reason at any time, you have the right to do that. If something happens that bothers you and you'd like to talk to the facilitator, please let us know in the chat. If we cannot address it during the focus group and you would like to discuss it, we are happy to talk with you after the focus group. Just let us know.

To thank you for your participation, we will be emailing each of you a \$50 gift certificate to the email that you provided earlier. We will send this out before midnight today.

We do many things to make sure your answers are private. Anything that is shared here today is private. This means we will not share your answers or provide quotes that would identify you unless we are worried about you or someone else's safety. We will summarize the information collected from this focus group in a report without using names. What is shared in this focus group stays in this focus group. You are not allowed to share anyone's information or answers with anyone once we leave this focus group. We record focus groups as a backup and so we can double check that our notes are accurate. We keep the recordings private and destroy them at the end of the project.

Does anyone have any questions?

Do you agree to take part in this focus group? Please say yes if you agree.

Do we have your permission to start recording? Please say yes if you agree.

Excellent! Let's get started.

### **Protocol**

#### **Identity**

We are going to show you sets of questions. Any potential future NSCAW data collection(s) may include these questions. People your age may be asked these or similar questions in that survey. We want to make sure we are asking questions in the best possible way. We want youth to understand the questions and feel comfortable answering them. We are asking for your input on these questions.

One of the topics we want to ask young people about is aspects of their identity which is who you are. Young people may be in the process of learning more about their identity. They may be unsure about parts of their identity. Others are confident about many or all parts of their identity. Others may feel some parts are more important than others. We want to learn about this process of "identity development." We

want to learn about this from youth with experiences with the child welfare system. It may influence other things happening in a young person's life.

Surveys often ask people about their race and ethnicity. You may have seen questions about race and ethnicity on school forms. You may have seen questions about race and ethnicity at doctor's offices. We want to know the best way to ask about race and ethnicity from young people. We have an example of how these questions may be asked. Please take a few minutes to review the questions."

### Racial Identity

[Facilitator: share racial identity question approach on your screen]

Racial Identity - Example Approach	
<b>What is your race and/or ethnicity?</b> <i>Select all that apply and enter additional details in the spaces below.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b> – Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, Maya, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Asian</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese <input type="checkbox"/> Korean <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese Enter, for example, Pakistani, Hmong, Afghan, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Black or African American</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Jamaican <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian <input type="checkbox"/> Nigerian <input type="checkbox"/> Ethiopian <input type="checkbox"/> Somali Enter, for example, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, Ghanaian, Congolese, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Hispanic or Latino</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican <input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican <input type="checkbox"/> Salvadoran <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban <input type="checkbox"/> Dominican <input type="checkbox"/> Guatemalan Enter, for example, Colombian, Honduran, Spaniard, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Middle Eastern or North African</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese <input type="checkbox"/> Iranian <input type="checkbox"/> Egyptian <input type="checkbox"/> Syrian <input type="checkbox"/> Iraqi <input type="checkbox"/> Israeli Enter, for example, Moroccan, Yemeni, Kurdish, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan <input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro <input type="checkbox"/> Tongan <input type="checkbox"/> Fijian <input type="checkbox"/> Marshallese Enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc. <input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>White</b> – Provide details below. <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> German <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Italian <input type="checkbox"/> Polish <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish Enter, for example, French, Swedish, Norwegian, etc. <input type="text"/>	

Do you have any questions about the items describing race and ethnicity?

- What ways of asking about race and ethnicity make the most sense to you? The example shared is one way to ask about race and ethnicity. It involves asking people to “select all that apply” from a list of choices.
  - o Are there better words to use than “race” and “ethnicity”?
  - o Are there people who may feel left out with the way the example is written? What can we do with the question wording or answer choices? We want to make it respectful and sensitive to young people with different identities.
- Which words do you think people your age might find confusing?
  - o What do you think might be confusing about them?
- Are there ways of asking about race and ethnicity that would make you not want to answer the questions?
- Why might you choose to not answer a question about your race or ethnicity?
- What other feedback do you have about these questions?

### Gender Identity

We would like to talk about gender identity now so that you can help us learn more about how people your age think or talk about it. After we talk about gender identity, we will have similar questions about sexual orientation. We want to make sure that in the future, we are asking questions in a way that reflects how people your age talk about gender identity and sexual orientation to make sure that we are as inclusive as possible. Remember, we are not asking you to answer these or any questions about yourself, specifically. We are asking for your thoughts on what people your age might think about these questions. We will show you two approaches to asking about a person’s gender. Approach 1 has two parts; Approach 2 is a single question.

Gender Identity – Example Approaches	
Approach 1	Approach 2
1a. What sex were you assigned at birth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Intersex</li> <li>• I don’t know</li> <li>• Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>	2. How do you describe yourself? Please select one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisgender girl/woman</li> <li>• Cisgender boy/man</li> <li>• Transgender girl/woman</li> <li>• Transgender boy/man</li> <li>• Nonbinary</li> <li>• Intersex</li> <li>• Genderqueer/genderfluid</li> <li>• An identity not listed here. Please describe ____.</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• I don’t know what this question is asking</li> <li>• Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>
1b. Which best describes your gender identity? Select all that apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girl/woman</li> <li>• Boy/man</li> <li>• Transgender girl/woman</li> <li>• Transgender boy/man</li> <li>• Nonbinary</li> <li>• Genderqueer/genderfluid</li> <li>• An identity not listed here. Please describe ____.</li> <li>• Questioning or unsure</li> <li>• I don’t know what this question is asking</li> <li>• Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>	

- Do you have any questions about these items designed to ask people your age about gender identity?
- Which words or terms do you think people your age might find confusing?
  - o What do you think might be confusing about them?

- Do you think people your age would be more willing to answer honestly the two questions in Approach 1 or the one question in Approach 2?
- What can we do with the question wording to make it respectful and sensitive to young people with a wide range of identities?
- What's missing from either of these approaches?
- What challenges might someone have answering questions about gender identity in Approach 1?
- What challenges might someone have answering questions about gender identity in Approach 2?
- Why might people your age choose not to answer a question asking about their gender identity?
- Do you have any other feedback about these approaches?

### Sexual Orientation

As a reminder, we are not asking you to answer these or any questions about yourself, specifically. We are asking for your thoughts on what people your age might think about this question.

#### Sexual Orientation – Example Approach

Which of these options best describes how you think of your sexual orientation? Please select all that apply.

- a. Straight (a man attracted to women OR a woman attracted to men)
- b. Lesbian (a woman attracted to other women)
- c. Gay (a man attracted to other men)
- d. Bisexual (attracted to people of their own and other genders)
- e. Queer (a person who does not conform to rigid notions of gender or sexual orientation)
- f. Pansexual (attracted to people regardless of biological sex, gender, or gender identity)
- g. Asexual (not sexually attracted to anyone or having no sexual orientation)
- h. An identity not listed here. Please describe \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Questioning or unsure
- j. I don't know what this question is asking
- k. Prefer not to answer

- Do you have any questions about these possible response options for a question asking about sexual orientation?
  - o Are there people who may feel left out with the way the example is written?
- Which words or terms do you think people your age might find confusing?
  - o What do you think might be confusing about them?
- Do you think people would answer this question honestly as it is written?
- Why might you choose to not answer a question about sexual orientation?
- What can we do with the question wording to make it respectful and sensitive to young people with a wide range of identities?
- Do you have any other feedback about this question?

### Identity Importance and Identity Support

In this section we will review different questions about “identity.” For these questions, “identity” could mean any type of identity that is important to people your age such as race, ethnicity, gender, ability and disability, personality (e.g., happy or bubbly), birthplace, or religion to name just a few. Think about an identity or identities that are important to you as you think about and respond to the questions.

[Facilitator: Share screen and show statement tables below]

#### Identity Importance Statements

I feel a strong attachment towards this identity
I have a strong sense of belonging to this identity group

- o What is your reaction to these identity importance statements?

- o Think about people your age. How easy or difficult would it be for them to answer these questions?

### Identity Support Statements

There are people in my life who help me learn more about this identity
There are people in my life who make it harder for me to learn more about this identity
Others treat me unfairly, judge, or harm me because they don't accept this identity
I have at least one adult where I live right now who supports me in this identity
[Ask this item only if youth are currently in foster care]: I have at least one adult in my family—that is, my birth or adoptive family who I don't live with right now- who supports me in this this identity
There are other important adults in my life who support me in this identity
I have friends who support me in this identity
I feel supported in this identity when I am at school

- o What is your reaction to these identity statements?
- o Think about people your age. How easy or difficult would it be to answer these questions?

### Overall Identity Questions

Thinking overall about identities...

- Which identities do you think are important to people your age?
- We are wondering if we should ask additional questions about youth identity. Are they important to ask? Why or why not? What feedback do you have about answering questions about identity?
- With respect to identity measures reviewed, what terms do you think makes the most sense to people your age?

### Well-Being

Any potential future NSCAW data collection(s) will want to understand youth “well-being”. There are many ways this idea can be measured. We want to hear from you what you think about this terms. Tell us what comes to mind that could contribute to the well-being of other people your age. Examples include physical health, social relationships, school-related topics, and mental health. Other examples include housing and participation in activities. You may think of other things that affect youth well-being, too. Once again, you don't need to disclose anything about yourself.

We want to hear what you think others your age might say in response to these questions:

- What does “well-being” mean to you?
- What brings you joy or happiness?
- What makes you feel valued?
- What brings meaning to your life?

### Involvement in Systems

In any potential future NSCAW data collection(s), we will want to explore how people your age feel about their experiences with different systems. Systems could include the child welfare system, which might be called different things, like “CPS”, “family services”, and other names. Other systems include the youth justice or juvenile justice system, which includes experiences with the police, courts, detention facilities and jails. It also includes systems like health care and education. There are also systems that help families pay for food, housing, etc.

- Do you have questions about what some of these systems are called?
- How might people your age refer to these systems? What do they call them?
  - o [If not discussed by this point]: Sometimes the child welfare system is referred to as CPS, or DCF, DCFS, DYFS or something similar. What do people your age call this system?



- What about experiences with the child welfare system? Are there things that could happen to young people involved in the child welfare system that others your age might view as helpful, not helpful, or harmful?
- Which systems that serve youth and family should we be asking people your age about in any potential future data collection(s)?
- What kinds of things would people your age view as helpful within different youth and family-serving systems? How so?
- What kinds of things could be viewed as not helpful or even harmful by people your age within different systems? How so?

### Response and Engagement

We want to make the survey the best experience it can be for people your age. For our last topic, we would like to know your preference for how you might take a survey or do an interview. We also want to know what you might need to feel comfortable answering questions.

- The length of the interview is expected to be around 45 minutes. Given this length of time, what is the best way to collect information from people your age?
  - o What concerns do you have about taking part in an in-person interview?
  - o What information would you have concerns about providing to an interviewer in person? Some examples might be your gender identity or race.
  - o If we offered the survey online, what type of device would you be more likely to use? A mobile device, such as a cell phone or tablet? Or a laptop or computer?
  - o How do you think people your age would like to respond to this survey? (e.g., online like this, in person? [*Probe for feedback on in-person, telephone, paper, and online methods*])
  - o What days of the week and/or times of day are you most likely to have 45 minutes to take a survey in the future (e.g., weeknights, weekends)?
  - o How long would you consider too long for an interview?
- In the past, youth have received a gift card for taking part in a survey. They have also received a gift of appreciation such as headphones as a thank you for taking part. What would you prefer to receive as a thank you for participating in a survey?
  - o Do you think people your age would use a gift card to shop online or in an actual store?
  - o In what types of places, stores, or websites might people your age spend a gift card?
- If the project team created a video on YouTube that described the study, would you be willing to watch it to learn more about participation?
- In the past, we have created fact sheets tailored to youth to increase engagement. What information should the materials cover to increase participation among people your age?
  - o What would be the best way to share these materials with you? [*Facilitator can provide prompt examples if there are none mentioned including Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, website, email, texts, phone call*]
- What would be their preferred mode of answering questions about these topics?
  - o In-person interviewer asks questions and records answers;
  - o In-person interviewer reads questions and youth enters answers on a computer;
  - o On-line interviewer asks questions and records answers;
  - o On-line interviewer asks questions and youth enters answers on a computer
- Would you like reminders to complete an online interview so that you remember it is coming up?
  - o What kind of reminders would work best?

### Closing

Those are the last of the topics that we'll talk about. We are down to our last question.

- Are there other topics that we haven't talked about that would be important to ask of young people who have been impacted by the child welfare system?

Thank you very much for taking part and for sharing your thoughts and perspectives on these topics. We will be sending out the gift cards by email no later than midnight. If you have not gotten your gift card by tomorrow, please reach out to Teresa Johnson [tbjohnson@rti.org](mailto:tbjohnson@rti.org).