

Youth and Parent Voices for Research Study

Instrument 5: Focus Group Guide for Youth Ages 15-17 – Topic Set 2

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 don't 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 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 help to 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 before? [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.

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, [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 learn what you think about it. If you're able to, 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 on Zoom. We are going to speak to each other respectfully. At some point, you might hear something 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 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 feel sad or 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, 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 has ended. 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 tonight.

We do many things to make sure your answers remain 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

Happiness

The things in this list will be shown to people your age. Youth will be asked to answer how happy they are with each part of their life. This will be on a scale from 0 to 10. We would like to know if you think these items will make sense to people your age. We would like to know if we are missing items that are likely to be important to young people and if you think people your age would answer these questions honestly. First, take a couple of minutes to read through these items.

Your relationships with your family (asked of youth who live with their family/are not in out-of-home care)
Your relationships with the people you currently live with (asked of youth in out-of-home care only)
Your relationships with family you don't currently live with
The home that you live in
How much choice you have in life

Your relationships with your friends
The things you have (like money and the things you own)
Your health
Your appearance (the way that you look)
What may happen to you later in your life (in the future)
The school that you go to
How safe you feel at school
The way that you use your time
How safe you feel in your neighborhood
Things to do in your neighborhood

- Do you have any questions about the happiness items?
- The response choices for these items will be on a scale from 0 – 10 with 0 being “*not at all happy*” and 10 being “*extremely happy*.” Do those options make sense?
- Do you think it would be better to ask “*how satisfied are you*” instead of “*how happy are you*”?
 - o Why or why not?
- Do you think that the wording used in these items will make sense with people your age?
- What words or terms may be confusing?
 - o How should we ask about “*family*” and “*home*” with young people living in foster care?
 - o Do you think other young people feel differently about their safety depending on where they are (like school, home, or in their neighborhoods)?
 - o Are there concerns youth might have about answering questions about safety?
 - o Is a single question about feeling safe, in general, good enough?”
- Are there things that should be on this list that are missing right now?
- How likely is it that people your age would answer questions about these items honestly? Why or why not?

Belongingness

Well-being is the state of feeling comfortable, healthy, and happy. A part of well-being we want to ask youth about in any potential future data collection(s) is “belongingness” (feeling a sense of belonging with different groups of people). Please review these questions, and then we will discuss how you think others your age will view them.

I feel comfortable around my family
My family members like to spend time with me
Someone in my family accepts me for who I am
I feel comfortable around the people I live with right now (youth in out-of-home care)
The people I live with like to spend time with me (youth in out-of-home care)
There is someone I live with who accepts me for who I am (youth in out-of-home care)
I get along well with people my age
I am liked by other kids my age
I enjoy spending time with people my age
The adults at my school like me as much as they like other students
There is an adult at my school that cares about me
I have at least one really good friend (added per ACF request)
I enjoy going to school.

- Do you have any questions about these belonging items?
- Do you think these kinds of questions are important for youth “well-being”? Why or why not? As a reminder, well-being is the state of feeling comfortable, healthy, and happy.
- How well do you think these items will make sense to youth?
- How would you define family?

- For those of you with experience in foster care, how should we define or distinguish “family” when a youth is living in foster care?
- What would you change to the way we are asking about belongingness?

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after challenges and tough times. The idea of resilience is something that might be asked about in future data collection(s). Below are some items meant to capture “resilience” in youth. The responses can range from “not true at all” to “true nearly all of the time.” After looking through these items, we have a couple of questions about them. I’ll give you some time to read through the items.

I am able to adapt when changes occur
I can deal with whatever comes my way
I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems
Having to cope with stress can make me stronger
I tend to bounce back after illness, injury or other hardships
I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles
Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly
I am not easily discouraged by failure
I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life’s challenges and difficulties
I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear and anger.
I am comfortable asking for help when I need it.

- Do you have any questions about the resilience items?
- Do you think these kinds of questions are an important aspect of youth “well-being”?
 - o Why or why not?
- How well do you think these items will resonate with youth?
- What challenges might youth have answering these questions?
- The response choices for these items will be on a scale from 0 – 5 with 0 being “*not true at all*” and 5 being “*true nearly all of the time*.” Do those options make sense?

Substance Use

Many surveys ask young people about their alcohol or substance use. We are trying to find the ways to best ask these questions so we can get the most complete and accurate responses from youth who are responding to these questions. Please review the two approaches below. Think about which approach people your age would be more likely to answer honestly.

<i>Substance Use - Approach 1</i>	<i>Substance Use - Approach 2</i>
The next questions are about your use of alcohol and other drugs. Alcohol includes beer, wine, whiskey, gin, scotch, tequila, rum, or mixed drinks. "Other drugs" include a) marijuana, b) other street drugs like crack, heroin, PCP, or poppers, c) inhalants like glue or gasoline and d) any non-medical use of prescription-type drugs. Please do not include any prescription drugs you used only as instructed by a doctor. When was the last time: 1. You used alcohol or other drugs weekly or more often? 2. You spent a lot of time either getting alcohol or other drugs, using alcohol or other drugs, or recovering from the effects of using alcohol or other drugs? 3. You had withdrawal problems from alcohol or other drugs? 4. When was the last time you received treatment, counseling, medication, case management, or aftercare for your use of alcohol or any other drug? If you drink alcohol, how much do you usually drink? 1. I don't drink alcohol 2. Just enough to feel it a little 3. Enough to feel it moderately 4. Until I feel it a lot or get really drunk	Have you used alcoholic beverages, marijuana, or other drugs in the past 12 months for any of the following list of options: 1. Does not apply. I haven't used alcohol, marijuana or drugs in the past 12 months 2. To experiment (try using) 3. To get high 4. To have a good time with friends 5. To fit in with a group you like 6. Because of boredom 7. To relax 8. To get away from problems 9. Because of anger or frustration 10. To get through the day 11. Because it made you feel better 12. To seek deeper insights and understanding 13. None of the above

- Do you have any questions about the substance use items?
- Compare these two different ways of asking about substance use. What is your opinion on whether one is better than the other? Why?
- Words and phrases can become old and might not be used by young people. Which words or terms or phrases do you see in these approaches that need to be updated?
- What do you need to feel comfortable enough to answer these types of questions honestly?
 - o What about some of the other topics and questions we've discussed?
 - o Are there any questions that people your age may not feel comfortable answering no matter what? Why might they not feel comfortable doing so?
- Are there other things for us to ask people your age who have been impacted by the child welfare system about substance use?

Physical Health, Mental Health Care, and Prescription Drugs

- How important do you think it is that people your age are involved in decisions related to their physical and mental health care?
 - o Why do you feel that way?
- How important do you think it is that people your age are involved in decisions related to prescribed medication related to their physical or mental health, attention or concentration issues, or behavioral issues?
 - o Why do you feel that way?

Bullying

Next, we are going to talk briefly about bullying. Please share what you think.

- In what kinds of ways are young people bullied?
- How are young people bullied with social media?
- What social media platforms or sites are used the most by people your age?

Social Support

- How do people your age think about the concept of social support?
 - o What do you think this term means and what forms can 'support' take?
 - o Where and from whom are people your age most likely to receive support?
 - o Do you think that any potential future NSCAW data collection(s) should ask youth about social support? Why or why not?

These are helpful answers, thank you. Some other ways of thinking about social support include emotional support, financial support, help with solving problems in life, and helping you get the things you need.

Other topics?

Are there other ideas that we haven't talked about? What else might be important to ask of young people who have been impacted by the child welfare system?

Response and Engagement (optional, time permitting)

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 our goals, 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]*)
 - 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 an incentive that was not money (e.g., headphones) as a thank you for taking part. What types of incentives would you prefer?
 - 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 like 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

Needs assessment (optional, time permitting)

Sometimes, when young people are involved in systems like child welfare system, they are not asked what THEY think they might need help with. We'd like to learn what kinds of things people your age might need help with. We would like to include questions about these things in any potential future data collection(s).

We're going to show you a few short lists of things that young people may need help with and ask a few questions. Please take a few minutes to read each list.

Help with school and participation in activities

My grades at school
Fees for participating in sports, music, art or other activities or clubs <u>at school</u>
Fees for participating in sports, music, art, or other /activities or clubs <u>outside of school</u>
Being bullied or teased at school
Exploring career options
Getting into college or a trade school

Before I dive into the questions, I want to say that you do not have to say whether any of these things relate to your own needs. We would like your opinion on whether each one is something that a person your age might need help with.

- Do you have any questions about the needs on this list?
- Which needs related to help with school and activities are important to people your age but aren't on this list?

Help with basic needs

Getting enough food to eat on a regular basis
Getting clothes or shoes that fit me and are appropriate for the weather
Getting transportation to the places I need to go
Getting a place to live where I can count on staying for a long time
Finding somewhere else to live, other than where I am now
Getting my driver's license
Getting a job

- Do you have any questions about the needs on this list?
- Which basic needs are important to people your age but aren't on this list?

Help with health and mental health needs

Getting counseling or therapy related to my mental health
Reducing or stopping my alcohol or substance use
Reducing or stopping my smoking or vaping
Getting health care for a physical health problem
Getting health or mental health care where I am comfortable talking about my gender or asking questions related to my gender
Getting dental care
Getting glasses or contacts
Getting health care where I am comfortable asking questions and talking about changes in my body, sex, sexuality, and/or my sexual orientation
Getting access to birth control, abortion services, pregnancy care, and/or testing or treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

- Do you have any questions about the needs on this list?
- Which needs related to help with health/mental health are important to people your age but aren't on this list?

Help dealing with different systems

Dealing with my involvement in the youth or adult corrections system
Getting in touch with a caseworker, attorney, judge, or other people who work in the child welfare system
Getting a caseworker, attorney, judge, or other people who work in the child welfare system to listen to my opinions
Getting access to information about my family's child welfare case

- Do you have any questions about the needs on this list?
- Which needs related to dealing with different systems are important to people your age but aren't on this list?

Help dealing with loss, grief, relationships

Items presented to all youth, ages 11-17
Dealing with a parent or sibling being in prison or jail
Dealing with the death of a parent
Dealing with the death of a sibling or other close family member
Dealing with the death of a close friend
Learning about healthy dating relationships
Help with a dating relationship that is sometimes violent or scary
Ending a relationship with someone outside my family who tries to control, convince, or force me to do things I don't want to do

- Do you have any questions about the needs on this list?
- Which needs related to dealing with loss, grief, and relationships are important to people your age but aren't on this list?

The last few questions will be about general needs and not specific to any specific type of need.

- What might make it hard for people your age to answer questions about these things?
- If parents of kids your age were asked about the needs THEY have, what other needs do you think should be on the list?
- What are some ways we might help young people feel comfortable saying they have these kinds of needs?
- Think about the kinds of things people need help with. Do you think it is important to ask young people involved in the child welfare system what they think their family needs help with? Why or why not?
 - o If yes, would you prefer to answer questions about what you need in your own words (i.e., fill in the blank) or does it help to have a list of needs that you can just check yes or no to?
- What would you need to feel comfortable answering these types of questions honestly?
 - o Are there any questions you would not feel comfortable answering no matter what?

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.