

## Attachment 8 - Focus Group Moderator Guide

Thank you for joining us today. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm from Banyan Communications, a public health communications consulting firm. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is sponsoring this project. The purpose of this discussion is to hear your views and opinions on important health topics concerning shellfish safety. Your insights are very important to us, and your time today is appreciated. We will have about 60 minutes for our discussion.

Before we begin, I want to review a few ground rules for our discussion.

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- 1-2 notetakers from Banyan and observers from CDC will be present to hear your opinions directly and take notes so that your opinions are accurately captured.
- We will also record and transcribe today's session. The recording will help us to summarize today's discussion and will not be used for anything else.
- The session recording will be destroyed after the project is completed.
- Your identity and anything you personally say here will remain secure and no one will contact you after this interview is over.
- If at any time you are uncomfortable with my questions, you can choose not to answer.
- Be sure to only use first names during the discussion. Please do not use your last name. Also, if you bring up a friend or other person you know as an example in our discussions, please do not use their last name either.

Some Zoom considerations:

- Please mute your mic if you aren't speaking.
- Please do not speak over each other and wait until someone is finished before speaking. However, if mistakes happen, no worries.
- Let's use the "raise your hand" feature, especially if you can't get into the conversation. It's the button on the reactions panel. Let's give that a test.
- If you can, please leave your camera on. It's helpful to see your faces!
- If you need to go to the restroom during the discussion, please do so. No need to inform us. Simply turn off your camera and mic before you get up.
- Please turn your cell phone to vibrate or silent mode.
- Please do not answer your phone during this group unless it is an emergency.

CDC estimates the average public reporting burden for this collection of information is 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data/information sources, gathering and maintaining the data/information needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to CDC/ATSDR CDC/ATSDR Information Collection Review Office, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS H21-8, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA (0920-1154).

- We ask that you please not drive or operate a vehicle while you are in this group as it is dangerous.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

If I have your consent to participate and record this session, we can begin [wait for consent of each participant]

*Today, we're going to talk about collecting shellfish. You all were selected to participate in this focus group because you collect shellfish to eat for recreational, subsistence, or cultural reasons. Let's go around and have everyone introduce themselves—tell us the name you'd like us to call you. It's wonderful to meet you—let's get started.*

## **Section A: Knowledge and awareness**

1. Why do you collect shellfish? What motivates you?
  - Probe: Tradition or cultural importance?
  - Probe: Freshness or better flavor than what you get at the store?
  - Probe: Are shellfish you collect a major part of your diet?
2. What factors do you consider when deciding where to collect/harvest shellfish?
  - Probe: Do you ever consider water quality (e.g., how the water looks, if it's colored, has scum, or smells bad)?
3. What are some ways you know of to determine if it is safe to collect/harvest shellfish?
  - Probe: Look for shellfish advisories near the water?
  - Probe: Check for advisories online? Or on an app?
  - Probe: See what the water looks or smells like?
4. What water conditions would prevent you from collecting/harvesting shellfish?
5. How do you ensure that the shellfish you collect/harvest are safe to eat?
  - Probe: Do you cook it?
  - Probe: Do you look at, smell, or taste it?
6. What comes to mind when you hear "harmful algal bloom"?
  - Probe: Have you heard this term before?
  - Probe: Maybe you've heard something online or on social media, on TV or on the news?
  - [If no or low response, provide definition of HAB, including other names for HABs (e.g., red tide, toxic algae)]
7. Have you ever heard of harmful algal bloom toxins in fish or shellfish? [If needed: These toxins can cause illnesses such as neurotoxin shellfish poisoning, paralytic shellfish poisoning, ciguatera (pronounced: see-gwuh-ter-uh) poisoning, diarrhetic shellfish poisoning, and amnesic shellfish poisoning]
  - Probe: If so, where?
  - Probe: If so, in which kinds of shellfish?
  - Probe: Have you heard of the types of symptoms/illnesses they cause? What have you heard?

## **Section B: Shellfish collection behaviors**

8. What time(s) of year do you typically collect shellfish?
9. How do you typically collect shellfish?

- Probe: Do you get into the water? Use a net from a pier?
10. What kinds of water bodies do you typically visit to collect/harvest shellfish?
- Probe: Oceans? bays?
  - Probe: Why?
11. Do you ever check for shellfish advisories before collecting/harvesting shellfish?
- Probe: Why/why not
  - Probe: If yes, how and where do you find shellfish advisory information?
  - Probe: Where would you like to find shellfish advisories?
  - Probe: What makes it difficult? Easy?
  - Probe: What would make this easier for you?
12. How often do you follow shellfish advisories?
- Probe: When do you follow them?
  - Probe: Why/why not?
  - Probe: What makes it difficult? Easy?
  - Probe: What would make this easier for you?
  - Probe: Do you trust the information in shellfish advisories?

### **Section C: Risk norms, perceptions and concerns**

13. Who do you think is most likely to get sick from shellfish contaminated with harmful algal bloom toxins?  
*[Define “harmful algal bloom toxins” if not defined during discussion earlier]*
- Probe: Do you think some people are more likely than others to get sick?
  - Probe: Certain age groups?
  - Probe: People who have other health issues?
  - Probe: People who get their shellfish from certain areas?
14. How likely do you think it is that you will get sick from shellfish contaminated with harmful algal bloom toxins?
- Probe: Why do you think that you are likely/unlikely to get sick?
  - Probe: Do you think you’d be likely to get mild symptoms or more serious symptoms?
15. Have you or anyone you know ever gotten sick from eating shellfish contaminated with harmful algal bloom toxins?
- Probe: If yes, did anything about your/their behavior change after that? and why?
16. Do you ever get headaches, nausea, light headedness, or other symptoms while collecting shellfish?
17. Who do you trust for information about food poisoning from shellfish?
- Probe: Your doctor or public health department? Someone else?
  - Probe: Why do you trust this person/source?
18. For those who don’t check or follow fishing or shellfish advisories before collecting/harvesting shellfish, what might cause you to change your mind?
- Probe: What behaviors would you change? Why?

## Section D: Terminology

*I am going to present several terms for you to look at and then ask a question.  
[present terms on slide]*

19. Which of these phrases do you prefer and why? *[present terms on screen and read aloud]*

- Collect shellfish
- Harvest shellfish
- Gather shellfish
- Catch shellfish
- Something else (specify)

20. Which of these terms do you prefer and why? *[present terms on screen and read aloud]*

- Red tide
- Harmful algae
- Toxic algae
- Harmful algal bloom
- Something else (specify)

## Section E: Materials testing

*Now I would like you to look at a few [INSERT MATERIALS] that discuss information related to harmful algal blooms.*

*[Interviewer will display a concept (from **Attachment 9**) and give participants a few minutes to view and/or read the concept and then ask the relevant questions below. Repeat until all predetermined concepts for each participant have been reviewed.]*

21. How would you sum up in a few words your first impression of this [TYPE OF MATERIAL]?

- Probe: What do you like? Dislike?
- Probe: What makes you say that?

22. Is there anything confusing, unclear, or hard to understand?

- Probe: If yes, what?
- Probe: Are there any words or phrases that bother you, or that you think should be said differently?

23. [For webpages/social media posts] Would you follow the recommendations?

- Probe: Why? Why not?

24. [For chart] Do you find this chart helpful?

- Probe: Why? Why not?
- Probe: Would you use it? If yes, in what situations?

25. [For social media posts/chart] How do you feel about the graphics and color choices?

- Probe: What do you like/dislike about them?

26. What do you think about the length?

- Probe: Is it too long/short?
- Probe (for webpage): What do you think about how long you have to scroll?

27. [For chart/social media posts] Where would you expect to see this?

- Probe: Where would you prefer/like to see this information?
- Probe (for social media posts): Which social media channels would you like to see this on?

28. Who do you think this [TYPE OF MATERIAL] is intended for?
- Probe [if they say themselves]: What in the message suggested it was directed toward someone like you?
  - Probe [if they say anyone but themselves]: Why don't you think this was meant for you?
  - Probe [if they say anyone but themselves]: Why do you think this was meant for that audience?

29. Is there anything you want to know about this topic that this does not tell you?

### **Section F: Closing**

30. Before we close, I would like to know what topics have we not covered about harmful algal blooms and shellfish safety that you might want to learn more about?

Okay, that's all the time we have for today. Do you have any final thoughts?

Excuse me for one moment so I can check with our notetakers to ensure no additional questions need to be asked.

Thank you for your participation. We value your time and appreciate your feedback on how to improve information and messages about harmful algal blooms and shellfish safety. Have a good day/evening.