

Tailored Services Team Focus Group Guide—for States (cross-center instrument)

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Tailored Services Project Team Focus Group Guide - States

For use with state tailored service project team members

Facilitator script

Thanks so much for taking the time to join us to talk about your project with the Center for States.

My name is _____ and assisting me is _____. We're both with James Bell Associates, a research and evaluation firm based in Virginia. (Facilitator may add in personal comments.)

The Children's Bureau has asked us to evaluate the services of the Capacity Building Centers and to get some information from child welfare staff about your perceptions of their services.

They want to know what has been helpful, what has worked well, and how services might be improved. We are having discussions like this with several groups of child welfare staff around the county.

You were invited because you have participated in a project with the Center for States, so you're familiar with what it's like to work with them.

In this discussion, there are no wrong answers but there may be different points of view. Please feel free to share your perspective even if it differs from what others say. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in what hasn't worked well as what has worked, and at times comments about what hasn't worked well are the most helpful, because they provide information about changes that might be needed.

We would like to get your permission to audio record the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis in this discussion, but we won't use any names in our reports. Also, please understand that although we will take every precaution to maintain privacy of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents us from offering confidentiality. We would like to remind you all to respect your fellow participants and the privacy of what is discussed here today and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others outside this room.. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your candid thoughts about these topics, knowing that we will not be providing any information about what you say in this room to your colleagues, supervisors, or agency leadership – our reporting goes back to the Children's Bureau and the Centers to help them understand how Center services are being received.

Well, let's begin by helping me learn a little about each of you.

Facilitator guide

Introductory/warm-up questions

First, how long have you worked here and what is your role? (round robin)

What would you say is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part? (round robin)

Opening question

I understand that you have been working with the Center for States for about (x) months now on (project title). Thinking back, what stands out to you the most about your experience with the Center on this project?

- Probes: What was helpful, useful, or worked well; What was not helpful, useful, or did not work well?

Application of CM Approach

The Center for States uses an organizational change and implementation process when supporting projects like yours. As you might already know, change management is an evidence-based process for organizational change and implementation that the Center has organized according to five phases. (Facilitator shares copy of the CM Approach handout.) We'll refer to that as the Change Management Approach.

How familiar would you say you are with the CM approach?

- How did you learn about it?

Would you say you used the CM Approach in your project?

- In what way? (or) Why do you say that?
- Would you say the CM Approach was a new way of approaching work for your team, or did it feel familiar to how you typically implement projects?

What are your thoughts about using the CM Approach?

- Probes: Were there things you thought were helpful about the CM Approach? Was there anything about it that was unhelpful or challenging?

Did you find the CM Approach confusing in any way, or was it clear?

- What about the approach was clear or unclear?
- Can you think of a way to make teaching the CM Approach more simple or clear? [Trying to get at: Which strategies for teaching/learning the CM Approach are perceived by jurisdictions to be most and least successful?]

Effectiveness of tailored services

When agencies work with the Center for States, they often target certain organizational capacities (or practice changes) for improvement. We are told that for your project, you were working to improve (capacity A, capacity B, specific practice changes). (Insert information here from the work plan so they recognize what outcomes we're referring to – don't just name the capacity dimension.) We wanted to get an understanding of the role the Center played in supporting your work toward these outcomes.

- What is your perspective about whether/how your organization's (capacity/practices) in these areas has changed?
 - o Probe: How do you know?

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- To what extent would you say working with the Center helped improve your (organizational capacity/practices)?
- In your opinion, what was it about working with the Center that helped you improve organizational capacity (OR ... that helped you to change practices)?
 - o Probe: was it the Center's expertise, having them help you stay on track, having an outside thought partner...
 - o Follow up: How would you say you used the Center's TA to improve your outcomes?

Closing question

Of all the things we discussed here, what to you is the most important for the Children's Bureau to understand? (round robin)

END