TANF and Child Support Moving Forward: Further Incorporating Family Input

Implementation Team Focus Group Guide

Introductory Statement and Consent

Thank you so much for talking with me today. As a reminder, my name is _____ and my colleague, _____, is on the call as well. I am with an organization called [Mathematica/MEF Associates]. We are still assisting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in understanding how programs use family input for program improvement and learning about your experience using the Family Input Resources. For context, when we say Family Input Resources, we are referring to the collection of guidance, tools, and resources that the study team provided to engage families and improve their experience in your program. We are especially interested in learning about your use of the Family Input Resources since the pilot testing period ended. The goal of this discussion is to learn about your team's successes and challenges after the pilot, as well as your overall reflections on your program improvement efforts, which may inform and improve [child support/ TANF] programs' use of the resources in the future.

Our conversation will take about one hour. Your participation in this focus group is voluntary and you may leave the focus group at any time. You may choose not to answer any question you do not want to answer. We ask that you keep each other's responses private. We will keep your responses private, as well. We will produce a report based on the findings from these conversations in which we may identify your program as a contributor to the study, but we will not include the names of individual respondents in any reporting.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 09/30/2025.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Is it alright if we record this conversation? The recording will not be shared with anyone outside our research team. Once we finalize our notes, we will delete the recording.

[**INTERVIEWER:** PRESS RECORD IN THE WEBEX AND ASK, "TO DOCUMENT CONSENT FOR OUR RECORDS, DO YOU GIVE YOUR PERMISSION FOR ME TO BEGIN THE INTERVIEW AND START RECORDING AT THIS TIME?"]

[**INTERVIEWER:** SPECIFY YOUR NAME, THE RESPONDENTS' FIRST NAMES, DATE, AND PROGRAM NAME]

Focus Group Questions

Recent program improvement efforts

We would like to start by discussing your program's improvement efforts since the end of the pilot, [#] months ago.

1. First, please tell us what efforts you've been making over the past [#] months to improve your program. [Interviewer may probe on the status of efforts that were ongoing when the pilot ended.]
2. How have you or your program involved families in ongoing or new program improvement efforts in the last [months since pilot end]?
3. How did your program's or community's culture influence your approach to gathering feedback from families?
4. What successes have you had gathering and using families' input in the last [months since pilot end]?
5. What challenges have you had gathering and using families' input in the last [months since pilot end]?
    a. How did you overcome or address those challenges?

Use of Family Input Resources

Thank you for sharing that. Now, let's focus more specifically on the Family Input Resources.

6. How have you or your program used the Family Input Resources in the last [months since pilot end]?
    a. If you haven't used them, why not? (Skip to next section)
7. What resources in particular have you used or referenced?
    a. To what extent did those resources help you with what you needed?

Shifts in attitudes and beliefs

Now we would like to spend some time thinking about changes you or your program have experienced because of the pilot and Family Input Resources.

8. Has your or your program's approach to the program improvement process changed because of your experience during the pilot? How so?
9. Has your—or your program's—perception of family input changed because of your experience during the pilot? How so?
10. Between the start of the pilot in [month 2023] and now, have there been shifts in the relationship between your program and the families you serve? How so?
    a. What role did the resources play, if any?

Closing reflections

We would now like to close with a few final reflection questions.

11. What have been your - or your program's - biggest lessons learned about engaging families as part of the program improvement process?

12. What do you know now that you wish you knew before starting the pilot process?
13. What would you tell someone in the human services field who is considering using the Family Input Resources to support their program improvement efforts?
14. What are your plans for using family input in the future?
15. Is there anything else we have not talked about but you think we should know?

Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate all that you have shared.