Provider Behavior Change Implementation Kit

Focus Group Worksheet

Purpose – to provide a general overview and best practices for conducting focus groups to collect data

A focus group session is typically held to allow deep discussion and data capture on a few topics by a fairly small group of individuals. Depending on the culture and skill of the facilitator, it is usually advisable to have between 8-12 individuals in a focus group discussion. When planning for your focus groups, be particularly conscious of the differences among participants and consider creating homogenous groups based on any important demographic attributes such as gender, age, political group, or religion. That will improve the comfort of your participants and allow for more open sharing and conversation.

The focus group facilitator plays a truly essential role in ensuring that everyone participates, that no one individual dominates, and that everyone remains on topic. This can be a challenge over the course of the hour or two that the discussion lasts, and so it's advisable to have a second individual taking notes so the facilitator can give total attention to the group. If it's possible and all participants agree, you can also audio tape the discussion—but be aware that this might lead some to be less forthcoming for fear of reprisals about statements they may make. In many countries, there are legal issues about recording, so be sure to check on any restrictions or requirements in your location.

Number and Composition of Groups	Protocol Topics	Facilitator	Data Capture
What are the key demographic distinctions to consider? How many individual groups will be needed to accommodate them?	*What issues or topics would you like the group to discuss? Will these be the same for all groups? or vary group by group?*	*Who will facilitate the discussion for each group? are they a good match to the demographics of their participants?*	*How will you capture data from the discussion for use in answering the investigative questions? What format does the data need to be in for analyses?*
Group 1	*Group 1 topics*	*Group 1 Facilitator*	*Group 1 Note Taker*
Group 2	*Group 2 topics*	*Group 2 Facilitator*	*Group 2 Note Taker*

Tips:

- Establishing "ground rules" at the start of the discussion is often helpful in creating group norms; if you say up front that you want to hear from everyone, it's easier to interrupt someone who is dominating the conversation by saying you want to ensure everyone's opinion is heard.
- If the groups goes off topic in a directly that is not informative to your investigative questions, continue to bring them gently back to topic by saying, "Can you help me understand how that impacts *(topic)*?" If they continue to drift off topic, assume they have exhausted that topic and move on to the next one
- It's a good idea to create a general protocol for the facilitator, listing the topics their specific group of participants is expected to discuss. If a second individual is capturing notes, be sure to share the protocol in advance so note taking is a bit easier. In most cases, notes will have to be reviewed and edited before submission for analysis—be sure both the note taker and the facilitator agree the data captures is a valid representation of the session before submitting.