Essentials of Planning and Conducting Focus Groups

OMNI

Using Probes and Asking Clarifying Questions

Using probes and asking clarifying questions are important skills in focus group facilitation and have two main purposes:

1. to help clarify what a participant has said,
2. to help get more detailed information on topics of interest,
3. to restate a question in a way that is more clear to a participant or set of participants.

Probes allow participants to provide more than just a one-sentence answer to the questions you ask. Effective probes let participants know that you are listening to their answers and that you would like to know more about their perspective on a topic. This also helps establish rapport, which is so important to the data collection process.

Examples of Effective Probes
Some examples of effective probes used to help clarify what a participant has said include:

"Please tell me (more) about that…"
"Could you explain what you mean by…"
"Can you tell me something else about…"

Exercise

Think of some effective things you could say or questions you could ask as a probe. Brainstorm other phrases that you might want to avoid.

Using Probes and Asking Clarifying Questions Helps Researchers Avoid Making Assumptions
By using probes and asking clarifying questions, the focus group facilitator can provide participants with clues as to how specific you would like their answers to be. Using probes and clarifying questions also serves as an effective way to invite participants to share details and examples. These techniques help you gather quality information, while avoiding the assumption that you understand the meaning of a key word, phrase, or experience of a participant. Probes such as the ones above help you gain insight into the perspective of focus group participants, which helps you avoid making ungrounded assumptions.

How to Use Probes Effectively
As a general rule, you want to interrupt participants as little as possible. If you feel that you need to follow-up with something a participant shares, make a mental note of it and ask them about it when they have completed their thought. You want to show participants that you are there to listen to what they have to say. Interrupting participants may influence how they answer, and if they answer the questions you ask. If participants stray off course, encourage them to complete their thought.

After they have finished their thought, it is appropriate to bring them back to the question you asked to make sure that they have answered it completely.

Use Open-Ended Questions
To help ensure that you are not making unsupported assumptions, we recommend making small steps in your questioning using simple, open-ended questions. In other words, we encourage you to avoid questions that someone could respond to with a "yes" or "no" answer. The following is an example of a closed-ended question – the type of question you will want to avoid:

Facilitator: "Sounds like the whole process was pretty good for you."

Participant: "Yes, it was."

More open-ended questions, in contrast, allow you to obtain more detail and elaboration from participants, which will better inform your research questions and keep you from making assumptions about what participants have shared. The following is an example of how to frame the same question, highlighted above, in a more open-ended fashion:

Facilitator: "So, overall, how would you describe your experience with the process/agency?"

A participant will be less inclined to answer "yes" or "no" to a question framed in this way.

Avoid Asking Leading Questions
Closed-ended or "yes/no" questions can lead to a second pitfall of interviewing or focus group facilitation: asking leading questions. Leading questions are those questions that suggest to participants how they should respond. Such questions "put words in people's mouths," which hampers your ability to learn what their experience and perspective is about a given topic. The example highlighted above illustrates how this can happen. Based on what the facilitator had heard a participant share, he/she assumed that this respondent's experience had been pretty positive. However, the facilitator may have learned only about one aspect of a single participant's experience. By asking a closed-ended, "yes/no" question that reflected the facilitator's assumptions about this respondent's experience, this not only directed this person's response, but also may have, inadvertently, made others reluctant to share divergent points of view, which would have helped the researcher understand, more fully, the facilitators and barriers of utilizing the services available at a particular agency or organization.

An Example of an Ineffective Probe that You Would *Not* Want to Use:

"So you're telling me that …………. Right?"

Time Management

Time management is perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of conducting focus groups. It is important that the facilitator and participants have agreed upon the amount of time they will spend in the focus group, and that this time is managed appropriately so that all the questions can be covered adequately in that timeframe.

Managing Time during the Focus Group

Participants sometimes have their own agenda and want to focus on topics that are different from those prioritized in the focus group guide. Here is where your skills as a facilitator are put to the test. As the facilitator, your job is to structure the focus group in a way that allows you to elicit complete responses to questions, probing insightfully so that you get the level of detail you need in order to explore salient issues adequately. Often, by outlining the major topics that you will explore during the focus group for the participants at the beginning of the group discussion, this helps participants stay focused on the issues at hand and self-monitor one another. In other words, this helps you engage participants in the responsibility of keeping the discussion on track.

Keep the Focus Group Moving

It is also your job to move the discussion forward politely when what a participant is sharing is less useful given your research questions. Sometimes, it is possible to do this by listening for, and taking advantage of, a segue – something that a participant shares that is relevant to another question or set of questions. Other times, you may want to acknowledge that your time together is limited and there are some other aspects of their experience that you want to be sure you have time to explore. For this reason, you are going to move on.

Efficient Use of the Focus Group Guide

A well-developed focus group guide will have built-in prompts that remind you, as the facilitator, to do a time check periodically to make sure that the focus group is progressing appropriately. If you do run out of time before you have covered all the questions in the guide, be sure to use your remaining time to explore only the most important questions remaining. The more familiar you are with the focus group guide and the purpose of the community needs assessment, the easier it will be for you to prioritize particular questions. This will also ensure that the focus group flows smoothly and efficiently, overall.

Not Rushing the Focus Group Participant

Overall, you want to achieve a balance between collecting necessary information and gathering important data that have not been anticipated. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference until you ask clarifying questions or probes. Again, you want to make sure that you interrupt the interview respondent as little as possible and not rush them with their answers while keeping them on course with the interviewing guide.

Guiding Principles for the Group

At the beginning of a focus group, it is helpful to let everyone know about some ways to make the group proceed smoothly and respectfully for all participants. The following are some recommended guidelines or "ground rules" that help establish the group norms:

- Only one person talks at a time.
- Confidentiality is assured. "What is shared in the room stays in the room."
- It is important for us to hear everyone's ideas and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers to questions – just ideas, experiences and opinions, which are all valuable.
- It is important for us to hear all sides of an issue – both the positive and the negative.
- It is important for women's and men's ideas to be equally represented and respected.

These ground rules may be presented to the group, and displayed throughout the discussion, on a flip chart page that is taped or hung on a wall in a clearly visible location. In addition to these ground rules, which have been established prior to the focus group, it is important to invite participants to establish their own ground rules or guiding principles for the discussion. Once the above ground rules have been presented, it will be important to ask participants if they have anything to add to the list. The note taker should add these to the flip chart page.

Tips for Conducting Focus Groups

- ✓ **Obtain informed consent**
  Read the consent form provided in this training manual. Make sure participants understand their rights, and ensure that they understand that their identities will not be revealed in any publications/reports.

- ✓ **Establish rapport**
  Often participants do not know what to expect from focus group discussions. It is helpful for the facilitator to outline the purpose and format of the discussion at the beginning of the session and set the group at ease. Participants should be told that the discussion is informal, everyone is expected to participate, and divergent views are welcome.

- ✓ **Follow the Focus Group Guide**
  The focus group guide provides a framework for the facilitator to explore, probe, and ask questions. Initiating each topic with a carefully crafted question will help participants share their experiences but in a focused and meaningful manner. It is helpful to follow the focus group guide as much as possible when facilitating a focus group, to increase the credibility of the research results. Using a guide also increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection more efficient. If participants give incomplete or irrelevant answers, the facilitator can probe for fuller, clearer responses. A few suggested techniques are:
    - *Repeat the question* – repetition gives more time to think.
    - *Pause for the answer* – a thoughtful nod or expectant look can convey that you want a fuller answer.
    - *Repeat the reply* – hearing it again sometimes stimulates conversation
    - *Ask when, what, where, which, and how questions* – they provoke more detailed information
    - *Use neutral comments* – "Anything else?"

- ✓ **Other Tips for Guiding the Discussion**
  In focus groups, it is not uncommon for a few individuals to dominate the discussion. Sometimes in mixed gender groups, one gender may tend to speak more than the other. To balance participation, and ensure that every participant has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, you might consider the following strategies:
    - ▪ Address questions to individuals who are reluctant to talk
    - ▪ Give nonverbal cues (look in another direction or stop taking notes when an individual talks for an extended period)
    - ▪ Intervene, politely summarize the point, then refocus the discussion

- ✓ **Minimize Pressure to Conform to a Dominant View Point**
  When an idea is being adopted without any general discussion or disagreement, more than likely group pressure to conform to a dominant viewpoint has occurred. To minimize this group dynamic, the facilitator should probe for alternative views. For example, the facilitator can raise another issue, or say, "We have had an interesting discussion, but let's explore other ideas or points of view. Has anyone had a different experience that they wish to share?"

- ✓ **Record the discussion**
  Ideally, focus group discussions will be recorded using both tape recording equipment and the hand-written notes of a note taker. Hand-written notes should be extensive and accurately reflect the content of the discussion, as well as any salient observations of nonverbal behavior, such as facial expressions, hand movements, group dynamics, etc. The note taker should monitor tape recording equipment and may also play a key role in keeping track of time.

Adapted from: USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation. “Conducting Focus Group Interviews.” *Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips.* 1996 (10).

Difficult Situations

Difficult situations may arise during your focus group. The following are some examples of common situations that can occur and what you can do in each of these situations.

What do I do if someone is dominating the conversation?

Focus groups, ideally, allow researchers to collect the opinions and ideas of a variety of people. If someone is doing a lot of the talking, however, this may prevent others from contributing their thoughts, and limits the usefulness of the focus group. It is important to notice when this is happening and do what you can to try to make sure that other people have the opportunity to say things, even if they seem reluctant at first or insist that what is being said by others reflects what they would have said. It is important to have people say things in their own words as much as possible. If someone is dominating the conversation, you might want to respectfully acknowledge their contribution, and thank them, saying something like, "I really appreciate your comments." Then make direct eye contact with other people and ask something like, "I'm very interested in hearing how other people are feeling about this issue" or "It's very interesting to get a variety of perspectives, and I would like to hear from other people as well."

What do I do if women and men are participating at different levels (i.e., men are speaking up more than women or vice versa)?

This situation is very similar to the one highlighted above, in which a few people are dominating the conversation to the exclusion of others. So, you may be able to apply many of the same strategies. Often, if there is inequality in how much men or women are participating, it is the women who speak up less and the men who speak more, though it is possible for the opposite to occur, as well. It is vitally important that both men's and women's voices be heard, and there are two sets of strategies for trying to deal with this situation. One set of strategies focuses on encouraging men to participate less and the other focuses on encouraging women to participate more. If men are dominating the conversation, respectfully thank a man who has just spoken, then suggest that it would be great to hear from some of the women present, as well. If women seem to be participating less, try to make a lot of eye with women, and even ask individual women direct questions.

What do I do if no one responds to a question?

In this kind of situation, it is helpful to try to understand why people aren't responding.

- ***Did you ask a question that was difficult for the participants to understand?***
  If you think this might be the case, you might try asking the question in a different way. The more familiar you are with the research objectives of a particular focus group, the more successful you will be in rephrasing or rewording a question in an appropriate way that ensures that salient issues are explored and the research integrity of the group discussion is maintained.

- ***Do you think you might have asked a politically sensitive question (i.e., something that people are afraid to answer honestly because it might make other people angry)?***

If you think this might be the problem, you might move to a different question or topic that is less sensitive, and try coming back to the topic later, or use probes, during a different line of questioning, that might get at aspects of the sensitive topic but more subtly.

Here, again, it might be helpful simply to rephrase the question or ask a slightly different question. Either approach may make it possible to pose a less controversial question to the group.

Are people tired of talking about the topic and/or do they have no more to say about a topic?
In this case, it may be important to simply state, "Is there anything else that you would like to share? [pause] If not, we can move on to our next question." This communicates to participants that this is their opportunity to contribute any additional thoughts and allows you to move on to the next topic more naturally and politely. If you, as the facilitator, think you haven't gotten all of the information you want on that topic, rather than trying to force things, just be aware that there may be an opportunity to elicit salient information through probing that occurs with respect to other questions. In other words, there may be important linkages and connections to explore throughout the focus group that emerge through subsequent discussion.

Are people feeling uncomfortable about talking?
This typically occurs at the beginning of a focus group and is less likely to occur when focus groups start with an icebreaker or the facilitator is able to set a comfortable tone and put people at ease in the beginning. If, however, this continues to be an issue during the focus group, you may need to back up and do a little work to make people feel more comfortable. Talk about easier topics, things that you think participants may be more familiar with or comfortable talking about, or, perhaps, things that you know are particularly interesting to them. This may help the participants begin to feel more comfortable talking in a group setting.

If no one responds to a question, and you aren't sure exactly what the problem is, it's okay sometimes to just wait it out. Be quiet for a moment and allow people time to think. Often, someone will speak up, either to answer the question or to ask a question that allows you to have a better understanding of the silence.

What do I do if the group begins to talk about topics that are not relevant to the research?

Sometimes the conversation will start to stray away from the topics of the focus group. When this happens, you might take advantage of a pause and say, "Thank you for that interesting idea. Perhaps we can discuss it in a separate session. For the purposes of exploring further the specific topics that are the focus of this discussion, with your consent, I would like to move on to another item." Another strategy is to orient the group to the time you have remaining for your discussion. You do not want the duration of the focus group to extend beyond the amount of time you communicated to participants. You may want to mention this when discussion strays from the intended focus, and then refocus the discussion accordingly or use this as an opportunity to indicate that you want to be sure that you hear from others.

What do I do if people are having side conversations (i.e., conversations among themselves)?

If people are having conversations among themselves, it can disrupt the focus group by making the other participants feel uncomfortable, making it hard for people to hear what others are saying, and making it hard for the facilitator to focus on what is being said. One of the best ways to handle this situation is to address it before the focus group begins, when you introduce focus group ground rules. Stress that it is *very* important not to have side conversations because it interferes with individual's full participation in the group discussion and also poses challenges for recording the discussion. If side conversations do occur during a focus group, do not stop the conversation abruptly. You might respectfully remind people of the ground rules and ask that people finish their conversations and rejoin the larger group discussion taking place. This kind of disruption may also signal that it is time to take a break, and you may want to suggest no more than a five minute break (so that people can use the restroom – make sure people know where to go – or to stretch). It will be important to make sure people know at one time the focus group will continue and be proactive about bringing people back together so that the focus group can re-convene. ***(If you do decide to take a break during the focus group, please remember to turn the recorder back on one the discussion begins again!)***

What happens if participants skip ahead, providing information relevant to, or even completely answering, a question that I haven't gotten to yet?

At times participants may skip topics or move ahead of where you are in the focus group guide. You will want to use probes to get detailed information from them on the topic at-hand, and then gently return the person to the topic of interest, falling back on the focus group guide. You do not want to interrupt them; rather, let them finish their thought and remain an interested listener. If they have already answered a question on the focus group guide you will still want to ask the question when you get to it, acknowledging that relevant information may have already been shared, but you want to make sure that the group has an opportunity to explore the issue more fully, if need be. You will want to make sure that all of the topics in the focus group guide are discussed as completely as possible during the discussion.

What do I do if I ask a question and the focus group participant says that they do not feel comfortable answering it?

A participant may not feel comfortable answering a question from the focus group guide. Or, it may be an issue of permission from a spouse to discuss the topic. This must be honored. According to research ethics and informed consent, a respondent may elect not to answer any question at any time. At the beginning of the interview make it clear that they may decline to answer a question(s) or choose to stop participating at any time. If this happens, say "thank you" and that you acknowledge and appreciate their honesty. Then, ask them if it would be okay to move on to the next question in the focus group guide.

What do I do if people begin leaving?

It is very important to try to keep people as fully engaged in the discussion as possible and for the entire focus group. You can try to mitigate this problem in advance by letting people know how long the focus group will take and emphasize that it is important for individuals to stay for the entire discussion. You may also ask the group at the beginning of the meeting if anyone has to leave early so that you can change the order of the questions to ask the most important questions before the first people leave.

EXERCISE

- *Discuss some of the most difficult situations you've experienced or anticipate experiencing. Explore other ways these situations might be handled.*
- *Think of other difficult situations that are not listed here and come up with ideas of how to address them.*

Qualities of an Effective Focus Group Facilitator

What are the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator?
What qualities does the facilitator need to possess to conduct a quality focus group?

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Keep participants focused, engaged, attentive and interested
- Monitor time and use limited time effectively
- Use prompts and probes to stimulate discussion
- Use the focus group guide effectively to ensure all topics are covered
- Politely and diplomatically enforce ground rules:
  - Make sure everyone participates and at a level that is comfortable
  - Limit side conversations
  - Encourage one person to speak at a time
- Be prepared to explain or restate questions
- Diffuse and pre-empt arguments
- After the focus group, work with the note taker to complete the Debrief Discussion Tool ***immediately*** after each focus group. To facilitate the debriefing discussion, review the notes of the discussion, discussing areas that seemed particularly important or salient given your knowledge of the research questions. Capture these insights using the Debrief Discussion Tool.
- Please be sure that ***one*** cassette tape, ***all*** consent forms, the focus group notes, and the Debriefing Discussion Tool are placed in the Fed Ex Envelop and are mailed to the transcriptionist immediately following each focus group. The second tape and all recording equipment should be given to a representative of Youth and Family Services.

Effective Facilitators:

- Have good listening skills
- Have good observation skills
- Have good speaking skills
- Can foster open and honest dialogue among diverse groups and individuals
- Can remain impartial (i.e., do not give her/his opinions about topics, because this can influence what people say)
- Can encourage participation when someone is reluctant to speak up
- Can manage participants who dominate the conversation
- Are sensitive to gender and cultural issues
- Are sensitive to differences in power among and within groups

Roles and Responsibilities of Note Takers

What are the roles and responsibilities of note takers?
What qualities do note takers need to possess to record a focus group effectively?

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Bring the following materials for the focus group:
  - Materials to record the focus group, including writing utensils (more than one, in case a pencil breaks or a pen runs out of ink) and ***a lot*** of paper
  - Bring a flip chart as well as markers of different colors for recording information (as needed) on a flip chart or dry erase board. NOTE: if a dry erase board will be used in place of a flip chart, be sure that dry erase markers are available or that you bring this type of marker.
  - Tape for affixing flip chart pages to the wall, as needed.
  - Recording equipment: a tape recorder, extension cord, extra tapes, and extra batteries
- Ensure that ground rules for the focus group are written clearly and neatly on a flip chart (it may be helpful to do this beforehand)
- Assist the facilitator in arranging the room (e.g., seating, flip chart stand and paper, placement of the ground rules, etc.)
- Accurately record ideas and comments shared by participants, as well as observations regarding group dynamics in hand-written notes using the Focus Group Note Taking Form
- Complete the Debrief Discussion Tool with the focus group facilitator ***immediately*** after each focus group. To facilitate the debriefing discussion,

review your notes with the focus group facilitator. Capture any new insights and major themes that emerged as a result of this discussion with the facilitator.

- Do not throw away any papers with notes of the focus group discussion. These will be stored with other data collected through the needs assessment.
- Please be sure that ***one*** cassette tape, ***all*** consent forms, the focus group notes, and the Debriefing Discussion Tool are placed in the Fed Ex Envelop and are mailed to the transcriptionist immediately following each focus group. The second tape and all recording equipment should be given to a representative of Youth and Family Services.

Effective Note Takers:

- Have good listening skills
- Have good observation skills
- Have good writing skills
- Are able to take notes that are comprehensive but not word-for-word
- Use the note taking form provided
- Act as an observer, not as a participant
- Can remain impartial (i.e., do not give her/his opinions about topics, because this can influence what people say)

Recording Equipment

We recommend using both a regular cassette recorder and a micro-cassette recorder for tape recording focus groups. Using two recording devices ensures that there is a "back-up" recording in case something should happen to one of these devices. Because the regular cassette recorder and micro-cassette recorder operate a different speeds, this ensures that one of these devices is recording at all times, even when the note taker has to turn a tape over. Using two tape recording devices also permits you to place these devices in different locations to ensure that all voices are captured well.

We recommend that 90 minute regular and micro-cassette tapes be used to record focus groups. Assuming that each group will last an hour and a half, and that the tape recorders are set to record at the slowest speed, this minimizes the chances that tapes will have to be turned over during a focus group, which minimizes disruption during the discussion.

OMNI will provide recording equipment, tapes and batteries, with the understanding that the Family and Intercultural Resource Center will be responsible for equipment that is lost or damaged.

Basic Instructions on how to use the micro-cassette recorder:

How to record:

- Once you have inserted a mini- or micro-cassette tape, push the **red** button and the PLAY button on the right side of the recorder. These buttons should be pushed down ***at the same time*** to begin/activate recording.
- When recording is occurring, a red light on the front of the micro-cassette recorder (beside the counter) will illuminate.
- The following are located on the left side of the recorder and should be set to the following positions:
  - TONE: should be set to the OFF/LOW position
  - PAUSE: When recording, the PAUSE button should always be in the OFF position.
  - TAPE SPEED: should be set to the 1.2 position
- To stop recording, simply push the STOP/EJECT button.
- The micro-cassette recorder has a built-in microphone.
- The adapter, if you have an outlet that is feasibly located, should be inserted into the port labeled DC IN 3V. It is important to insert two, new AA batteries into the micro-cassette recorder, and to bring extra batteries, just in case an outlet is not conveniently located.
- Turn the volume to 10.

Auto reverse:

There is ***no*** auto reverse feature with this recorder. This means that you will need to be aware of when the first side of the tape ends and flip it over to the next side. If you are using a 90 minute micro-cassette tape and have the 1.2 speed setting selected, you will need to turn over the tape in an hour and a half after you began recording.

Basic Instructions on how to use the regular/large cassette recorder:

How to record:

- Once you have inserted a regular cassette tape, push the RECORD and PLAY buttons. These buttons should be pushed down ***at the same time*** to begin/activate recording.
- When recording is occurring, a red light on the front of the recorder (just above the tape deck) will illuminate.
- To stop recording, simply push the STOP/EJECT button.
- The adapter, if you have an outlet that is feasibly located, should be inserted into the port labeled AC IN, on the right side of the recorder. It is important to make sure that you have four new C batteries in the recorder, and to bring extra batteries, just in case an outlet is not conveniently located.
- Insert the microphone into the port labeled MIC on the left side of the recorder. The microphone should be switched to the ON position during recording. If the microphone is switched to the OFF or STANDBY position, recording will not occur. It is important to be sure that the microphone has a new AA battery. Please ensure that you have extra AA batteries, just in case. The microphone has a long cord so that it can be placed in the center of a large table (so that it can pick up everyone's voice) and the tape recorder can be placed in a chair, off to the side, by the note taker who will need to monitor the recording device.
- If the cassette recorder has a voice activation option, this option should be set to the OFF position.
- Turn the volume all the way up to the maximum level.

Auto reverse:

There is ***no*** auto reverse feature with this recorder. This means that you will need to be aware of when the first side of the tape ends and flip it over to the next side. If you are using a 90 minute cassette tape, you will need to turn over the tape 45 minutes after you began recording. (**PLEASE NOTE:** This is different from the micro-cassette recorder.)

✓ Focus Group Checklist

<u>Remember to *bring* the following:</u>

- ☐ Two writing utensils (in case the lead in a pencil breaks/ a pen runs out of ink)
- ☐ A notepad with sufficient paper for taking notes during the entire focus group
- ☐ A flip chart and stand
- ☐ Dry Erase and/or regular markers of different colors
- ☐ Name tags or badges
- ☐ Tape for affixing flip chart pages to the wall, as needed.
- ☐ Recording equipment:
    - ☐ a tape recorder
    - ☐ extension cord
    - ☐ extra tapes
    - ☐ extra batteries
- ☐ Consent forms (enough copies for all participants)
- ☐ Extra pens for participants to sign consent forms
- ☐ Focus group guide
- ☐ Note taking form
- ☐ Debrief Discussion Tool

✓ Facilitator Checklist

<u>Remember to *do* the following…</u>

- ☐ Become very familiar with the primary research objectives of the study
- ☐ Become very familiar with the focus group guide
- ☐ Review this checklist
- ☐ Arrive at the focus group location a few minutes before participants to organize the room and your materials
- ☐ Welcome focus group participants, inviting them to get something to eat
- ☐ Explain, in a general and brief way, the purpose of the focus group and how information collected during focus groups will be used and toward what goal
- ☐ Introduce yourself and the note taker
- ☐ Explain participants' rights and what participating in the focus group will entail
    - ☐ Remind participants of the duration of the focus group, emphasizing the importance of their participation during the entire discussion
    - ☐ Let people know where the closest restroom facilities are located
- ☐ Obtain written consent to participate and have the focus group recorded
- ☐ At the end of the focus group, provide the contact information from whom they should contact, should they have any questions
- ☐ Complete the Debrief Discussion Tool with the note taker
- ☐ Ensure that tapes are labeled appropriately (see labeling instructions, below)
- ☐ Ensure that one tape, all consent forms, all hand-written notes, and the Debrief Discussion Tool are mailed to the transcriptionist in the envelope provided. The second tape and recording equipment should be returned to the designated representative from Youth and Family Services.

Consent to Participate in Focus Group Study as part of the Latino Community Needs Assessment

[NOTE: Verbal Consent will be obtained during focus groups conducted as part of the Latino Community Needs Assessment]

The purpose of the group discussion and the nature of the questions have been explained to me.

I consent to take part in a focus group about my experiences, including some ways to improve the services and resources available for Latinos in Summit County. I also consent to be tape-recorded during this focus group discussion.

My participation is voluntary. I understand that I am free to leave the group at any time. If I decide not to participate at any time during the discussion, my decision will in no way affect the services that I receive in Summit County.

None of my experiences or thoughts will be shared with anyone outside of OMNI Research and Training, Inc. unless all identifying information is removed first. The information that I provide during the focus group will be grouped with answers from other people so that I cannot be identified.

____________________________________ ______________________

Please Print Your Name Date

____

Please Sign Your Name

____________________________________ ______________________

Witness Signature Date

FOCUS GROUP NOTE TAKING FORM

Instructions: Please use this form to record the proceedings of the focus group. Notes should be extensive and accurately reflect the content of the discussion, as well as any salient observations of nonverbal behavior, such as facial expressions, hand movements, group dynamics, etc. Please use this form as a coversheet to attach to notes taken during a focus group, which should be securely bound together (with, for example a staple) to ensure that no pages are lost.

Please specify which focus group you are recording (please check one):

- ☐ Parental Involvement in Education
- ☐ Access to Services
- ☐ Community Involvement and Social Inclusion

Date of Focus Group: ______________________________

Location of Focus Group: ______________________________

Name of Note Taker: ______________________________

Space to Record the Proceedings of the Focus Group

Focus Group Debrief Summary Form[1]

Focus Group:
☐ Parental Involvement in Education
☐ Access to Services and Resources
☐ Community Involvement and Social Inclusion

Date focus group held:

Today's date:

Completed by:

Contact with whom (check all that apply):
☐ Parent Couples
☐ Single representative of a family
☐ Single individuals (no family)

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you during this focus group?

2. What new information did you gain through this focus group?

3. What new questions emerged for you as a result of this focus group?

4. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, curious or important during this focus group?

[1] This contact summary form was modeled after Figure 4.1 *in* Miles, Matthew B. and Huberman, A. Michael. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis, 2nd edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA. pp. 53.

5. What new or remaining concerns, inconsistencies, or challenges emerged during this focus group?

6. How would you describe the general atmosphere of the focus group?

7. Did participants seem engaged?

8. Overall, how would you describe the group dynamics? For example, were there individuals dominating the group? Did all participants contribute at some level?

9. What else is important to capture about this focus group?