Self-Represented Litigation Network

Guideline for the Use of Focus Groups

SJI State Justice Institute

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Part A. An Introduction to Focus Groups[1]

Focus groups are research projects in which a group of similarly-situated people are invited to participate in a group discussion regarding a research topic. The group discussion is primarily a conversation between a neutral group facilitator and the participants regarding the questions posed by the facilitator. Focus groups are not polls but in-depth, qualitative interviews with a small number of carefully selected people brought together to discuss the topic of interest. Unlike the two-way flow of information in a one-on-one interview, focus groups generate data through the give and take of group discussion. Listening as people share and compare their different points of view provides a wealth of information – not just about what they think, but why they think the way they do.

Focus groups are not a form of group interviewing (i.e., scooping up 10 interviews at one time). "Serial Interviewing" is not being done either – in which the facilitator asks a question and just passes from person to person getting an answer. Ideally, the facilitator places the question before the group. They then discuss it among themselves – talking to each other, asking each other questions about what they hear, and generally reacting to each other. It is a totally different dynamic from an interview.

Many courts have found that convening focus groups can provide a great deal of insight into how self-represented litigants experience the court and its programs to assist them. Focus groups are particularly helpful in identifying the barriers and difficulties that self-represented litigants experience and exploring with litigants who are familiar with the court's current processes possible procedural changes or services the court might implement to assist them.

Focus groups can also be used to bring together groups of judges, clerk's office staff, lawyers, self help center staff, or representatives of outside organizations whose clients come into contact with the court.

A focus group can help the courts gain an in-depth understanding regarding what a group of self-represented litigants or another selected group thinks

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[1] There are a large number of resources that can help you plan a focus group. This **Guideline** has relied extensively on information from the American Statistical Association, including "What is a Survey?" http://www.whatisasurvey.info/, Chapter 5, by Fritz Scheuren and the extensive written text and workshops materials on focus groups provided by the California Administrative Office of the Court, Center for Families, Children & the Courts. All materials used with permission. We found the work from both sources to be well written, thoughtful, concise, and worthy of replication and attribution.

about how your court is handling self-represented issues or how a program is working. This information can supplement and give insight into the **Surveys**[2] that a court might also conduct as part of a self assessment. The information from focus groups can provide vivid and rich descriptions of how people view a program's strengths and weaknesses. "'Focus groups' give the court a sense of what makes people tick and a sense of what is going on with people's minds and lives that you simply can't get with survey data."[3]

1. How Are People in Focus Groups Selected?

Unlike surveys in which the objective is to obtain information from all persons similarly situated or from a random sample of them, the membership of a focus is selected on purpose. The composition of a focus group is usually based on the similarity of the group members. Bringing people with common interests or experiences together makes it easier for them to carry on a productive discussion.

Often a research project will use different groups to get differing views. For example, an organization may be planning a major restructuring. For this project, three separate focus groups would be conducted – one with union members, one with nonunion employees, and one with managers. Each of these groups would represent a potentially different perspective on the changes facing the organization. Separating the groups eliminates potential problems in bringing together union members and management. The separate meetings allow people to feel free to speak spontaneously.

In the court setting, the court may conduct focus groups, for example, with self-represented litigants who have used a self help program, those who have not and lawyers who frequently have cases in which self-represented litigants are on the other side of the case. The organizer of the focus group should ensure that parties on opposite sides of the same case are not in the same focus group.

[2] This Guideline for the Use of Focus Groups is part of a larger package of tools for courts conducting self assessments of their programs to assist self-represented litigants. Two Survey instruments – an Exit Survey for persons leaving a courthouse and a Judge and Staff Survey for court personnel, together with instructions for their use entitled Guidelines for Data Gathering and an Access database for analyzing survey results, are provided as additional tools for the self assessment process.. *See* the *Guide to Self Assessment of Court Programs to Assist Self-Represented Litigants*.

[3] "What is a Survey?, Chapter 5, quoting Lee Atwater

2. What Types of Questions Should Be Asked in a Focus Group?

Questions should be open-ended so that there are many possible replies. Short-answer questions, such as those that can be answered "Yes" or "No" should be avoided. It is also important to avoid leading questions that suggest the facilitator's opinion or the answer that s/he hopes to receive. Questions also should be:

- clearly formulated and easily understood;
- neutral so that the formulation does not influence the answer;
- carefully sequenced with easier, general questions preceding more difficult ones; and
- ordered so that less intimate topics precede the more personal questions.

If your court decides to conduct a series of focus groups, your planning team should decide on the topics to explore with the focus group, and then identify several questions under each topic that will lead to a full conversation on the topic selected. The facilitator does not have to ask each question, but can use the questions as prompts to get full answers from the participants.

The following are examples of focus group topics and questions that might prove helpful.

<u>Sample Focus Group: Assessing a self-represented litigant program with a focus group of program users.</u>

<u>Sample Topic 1 – How helpful was the program in preparing you for your time in the courtroom?</u>

- Tell me about your experiences using the self-represented litigant program.
- What type of help were you looking for from the program?
- How did you get the help you needed?
- When you attended the hearing at the court, in what ways were you prepared?
- How could you have been better prepared?
- Is there anything that you wish the program had provided to you and did not?
- How can the program better support others like you in preparing for a court hearing?
- What would you have done to prepare for the court hearing if the program was not available to you?

Sample Topic 2 – How well is program set up to meet the needs of the litigants?

- How easy was it for you to use the services of the program?
- What types of things were convenient for you?
    - Hours
    - Scheduling
    - Getting in contact with the person you finally met with
    - Parking
    - Finding the location within the court
    - Getting done in the time you had
    - Getting everything done in one visit to the center
    - Other factors
- How much time did you spend at the center?
- Did the personnel know how to help you and did they have the knowledge and skills to help you?
- Was there anything frustrating about working with the center?
- Is there anything that you suggest we change?
- Was there anything that worked particularly well at the center?
- Is there anything you would add?

3. What Is the Ideal Size of a Focus Group?

The ideal size for a focus group is generally between six and twelve people. This group size influences how participants contribute their ideas. Too small a group is easily dominated by one or two members, or the engagement of the participants may fall flat if too few people have anything to contribute. If the group is too small the session may lapse into serial interviewing and lack energy. Too large a group lacks cohesion and may break up into side conversations, or people may become frustrated if they have to wait their turn to respond or to get involved.

4. What Is a Typical Focus Group Like?

Prior to the focus group, participants are usually recruited in person. This can be done by identifying people using the court who fall within one of the focus groups you are planning and figuring out how you can recruit them to participate while they are using the court. In the example set forth in Part C, Tools, one court intercepted parents as they were waiting for child support hearings during one week in September. Additional ideas are to have court clerks recruit participants for focus groups when self-represented litigants file forms or leave the self help center. Care needs to be taken to ensure that people who know each other are not recruited into the same sessions. People are generally more open and less guarded with people they don't know and don't have to worry about ever seeing again.

When being recruited, potential participants receive a brief description of what the group will be about, as well as assurances that their participation is entirely voluntary and that their confidentiality will be protected. See **A Summary of Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Interviews and Data Collection**[4] for detailed guidance concerning such materials. Focus group participants are often paid a small amount of money, such as $25 to $50, for reimbursement for their time and travel expenses. Alternatively, a court may provide a gift certificate to a local store or a meal. A comfortable, relaxed atmosphere is often created by providing light refreshments.

At the focus group itself, the facilitator begins with an introduction that should include the following:

- explaining the purposes of the focus group;
- laying down some basic ground rules to encourage everyone to participate in the discussion;
- reassuring the participants about the voluntary nature of their participation;
- introducing the facilitator and any co-facilitators and explaining how and why the group members were invited to participate (e.g., what they may have in common); and
- stating the purpose of note taking and recording.

The facilitator typically begins the discussion with an ice-breaker, giving participants the chance to introduce themselves to the group. Once introductions are complete, the facilitator guides the discussion, using an outline of questions, to explore various aspects of the research topic. As the group responds to each question, the facilitator can probe for more information and ask follow-up questions to elicit more discussion.

Focus-group sessions are frequently scheduled to last two hours, with the discussion taking 90 minutes. Once all of the questions have been asked, the facilitator may conclude by giving a summary of the major points in the discussion and asking the group for feedback. Or, the facilitator may have the participants think back over what was discussed and then have each one choose what he or she felt was the most important point. Another good way

[4] This document is a separate **Tool** prepared by the Self-Represented Litigation Network as a part of the materials for courts desiring to conduct self assessments of their programs to assist self-represented litigants.

of concluding is to ask participants if there are any questions about a particular topic that were not asked but should have been.

5. How Do You Keep Track of What Is Said During a Focus Group?

The most popular techniques for capturing data from focus groups include the following:

Video recording: This technique captures both verbal and nonverbal information. One drawback is that it can be intrusive and can inhibit some participants.

Audio recording: With this method you can obtain verbal information verbatim. A possible disadvantage is that nonverbal information and observational data are lost.

Manual note taking: This procedure involves hand written notes of the discussion. It is not recommended, however, given the speed limitations of writing by hand. With this method, you run the risk of severely altering the analysis by selectively recording things that were said loudly or repeatedly and missing the more subtle information that emerged from the discussion.

Multiple methods of recording: Notetaking, in conjunction with audio or video recording, definitely can be worthwhile. A co-facilitator can take notes.

6. How Do Focus Groups Compare to Surveys?

There are advantages and disadvantages to using any technique. The choice is constrained by budget, time, and availability of resources.

Focus groups and surveys have very different strengths. Focus groups excel at providing in-depth qualitative insights gleaned from a relatively small number of people. Surveys provide quantitative data that can be said to reflect the views of a larger population. Surveys measure things - frequencies of behavior, differences in attitudes, intensity of feelings, and so forth. Focus groups do not measure. They collect a breadth or range of information to tell a "story."

The best information can often be gathered by using the focus groups and surveys together. Surveys can provide precise quantitative information; focus groups can provide qualitative data that penetrates more deeply.

Among the advantages of focus groups are the following:

- A wide range of information can be gathered in a relatively short time span.
- The facilitator can explore related but unanticipated topics as they arise in the discussion.
- Focus groups do not require complex sampling techniques.

There is also a set of disadvantages:

- The sample is neither randomly selected nor representative of a target population, so the results cannot be generalized or treated statistically.
- The quality of the data is influenced by the skills and motivation of the facilitator.
- Focus groups lend themselves to a different kind of analysis than would be carried out with survey results. In surveys, the emphasis is on counting and measuring versus coding/classifying/sorting in a focus group.
- A focus group analysis is truly qualitative. You use the actual words and behaviors of the participants to answer your questions, rather than counting response options.

Part B. Workbook for Planning a Focus Group

The following pages contain a planning guide for courts that would like to work step by step through the planning process for conducting a focus group.

Step 1. Defining the Purpose of the Focus Group

What information do you want to get from the focus group?

Tips for developing the research question:

- Involve others in brainstorming sessions to identify the most important questions.
- Consider how well the question lends itself to being answered through a focus group(s).
- Consider how many focus groups will be needed to adequately address the topic.

Example of topic:
The impact of the program on customers' understanding of their legal problems.

Step 2. Selecting Focus Group Questions

What are a few questions that you think would be well suited to this focus group?

Tips for developing questions:

- As the list of questions is developed, group them by topic
- Prepare more questions than are expected to be covered in each group, as some of the questions may not be relevant to anyone within the group.
- Remember, the objective is not to get answers to a broad range of questions, but to acquire extensive understanding of a few.

Examples of questions:

- Could you have completed your legal forms without the center's assistance?
- Did you understand the information required in the form and why that information was required?
- How many times did you go to court to resolve the same issue? Was that because forms were incomplete?
- Did you file papers with the court after visiting the center? If not, why not? How many times did you try to file before they were completed?
- Were you able to get your papers served? Did you understand how to do that?
- Did you have a court hearing? If so, did you feel prepared for the hearing?

Step 3. Selecting Participants

Who is best qualified to answer your research questions?

Tips for deciding who should participate in the focus group(s):

- Identify which customers are best qualified to answer the research questions and limit your recruiting accordingly.
- Attempt to have the group represent the population served. For example, if 75% of your customers are non-English speaking, you should have groups in the prevailing languages used by your customers.

Tips for deciding how many participants/groups to convene:

- The number of groups depends on the topics and how different the experiences of the individuals that are best qualified to answer the question have been. For example, if you have only one attorney or clerk providing a particular service, you may only need one or two groups to adequately learn about her or his performance.
- In general, focus groups continue to discuss a question until new responses to the same question have been exhausted.
- Each group should have between 6 and 12 participants in order to allow for an engaging conversation between the participants.

Step 4. Recruiting

How are you going to get the best qualified people to your focus group(s)?

The success of a focus group depends largely on the methods used to recruit participants. In general, the more resources allocated to recruitment and retention, the more value will be gained from each group. ***Active recruitment of qualified participants is highly recommended.*** Focusing recruiting efforts on a smaller number of prospective participants, where resources can be concentrated, such as more phone calls without leaving a message and more incentives per participant, will often yield the best results—illustrated in higher participant turnout per focus group.

In general, face-to-face recruiting, where participants can be asked personally to participate and recruiters can describe the research and the incentives to be provided, is most successful. After customers have agreed to participate, continued contact is advised. For example, reminder phone calls the week before the group as well as the day before the group increase turnout.

The following are methods of active recruitment. While some are generally preferable over the others, you should choose the method or combination of methods best suited to your population.

- In-person intercept: Recruitment takes place at the point of service. Intercepting is generally followed-up with a phone call.
- Telephone: Phone lists provide the option of recruiting people who have already left the program. However, a thorough review of the accuracy of the list should occur early in the research plan and the annoyance factor of calling individuals at home should be considered.

- Email: Most preferable for professional populations. Should be followed up with phone contact.
- Mail: Least preferable, impersonal and easily discarded by respondents.
- Putting up flyers and asking for volunteers is not active recruitment. It is best to talk to the potential participants in person first to discuss their interest, and then follow up by telephone.

Step 5. Safety and confidentiality.

Preserving the safety and confidentiality of respondents is paramount in any research study. Before any recruitment takes place, carry out a careful review of safety and confidentiality issues for respondents (*see* Part C, Tools). Stopping persons as they leave an office or courtroom can interfere with steps they are taking to carry out their case, and put them at risk of encountering someone who jeopardizes their safety. Contacting respondents at home by phone or mail can jeopardize the confidentiality of their case.

Recruiters should guarantee that persons who are subject to domestic violence or other types of restraining orders are not part of a focus group, or another focus group conducted at the same place and time, containing the protected person.

Step 6. Incentives

What can you offer prospective participants as incentives to participate in your focus group(s)?

For nonprofessionals, incentives serve two purposes: they help assure the diversity of the group and show that the time contributed is of value. Incentives take many forms, including the removal of barriers:

- Convenience: Make it possible for participants to attend focus groups. Saturday and evening groups should always be considered. Make efforts to provide childcare.
- Transportation and food: Providing transportation and a meal for participants takes away a barrier and provides an incentive.
- Gifts or gift cards: A $25 or $50 gift certificate to a popular retailer can make the difference between someone deciding to participate or not.
- Defray some of the costs of participation: Providing a stipend of $25 or $50 can pay for child care and transportation.

Holding a focus group session at a local community center may also provide an incentive for participation. If the members of your focus group are chosen from a distinctive geographical area, you should consider holding the focus group in a facility within that area rather than in the courthouse.

Any combination of these should be used to help insure your sample is representative of your customers and does not include only those with the resources to attend your focus group. Additionally, if individuals decline to participate when they are offered the agreed upon incentive, court staff should record the reasons they decline, including any suggestion that the incentive offered is inadequate.

When recruiting professionals it is not appropriate to provide any form of cash or gift incentives. Incentives to consider for professionals include food and beverages, educational credits or copies of the self assessment report

Step 7. Obtaining Informed Consent[5]

How will you obtain informed consent waivers from your focus group participants?

Tips on informed consent:

Depending on the research design and sensitivity of the data to be collected, written consent may be required or verbal consent may suffice. By conducting a group where everyone signs a confidentiality agreement, of which the organization keeps a copy, the identity of the participants will be recorded. An anonymous group, where participants' names are not collected, may be preferable to the participants. Anonymity can be accomplished by instructing the recruiter not to provide the facilitator and notetaker with any information concerning the identity of the participants and to destroy her or his notes on names and telephone numbers at the conclusion of the focus group session.

In any case, participants must be informed of the following:

- The nature and purpose of the project
- That they can leave at any time or choose not to answer any question
- How the data will be used

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[5] As mentioned in footnote 1, this *Guideline for the Use of Focus Groups* is part of a larger package of tools for courts conducting self assessments of their programs to assist self-represented litigants. Another tool in this package is *A Summary of Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Interviews and Data Collection* that provides more information on informed consent.

- That their name will not be attached to comments or included in the report
- That their participation will not affect their case
- How they can get a copy of the final report
- Whom to contact if they want more information
- Whom to contact if they feel they have been negatively affected by participation in the group

Participants should be read the informed consent script aloud, even if the option for written consent is exercised, and they should clearly and convincingly be encouraged to voice their concerns if they do not understand what is meant by the document or if they have any questions. See the sample confidentiality agreement located in the Part C, Tools.

While obtaining informed consent should not be overlooked with professionals, it is especially important when working with nonprofessionals.

Step 8. Identify the facilitator and other staff

Who will be responsible for recruiting participants? Facilitating the group? Taking notes during the group?

Tips for staffing:

Facilitator: While the facilitator does not have to be an expert, s/he should know the subject matter and have some training on what to expect from participants, such as cultural issues that may arise. However, the facilitator must be objective, and ***a person with a stake in the outcome should NOT be the one facilitating the group***. For instance, if the court is assessing the performance of its self help center, no staff member or supervisor of the self help center should be a focus group facilitator. If there is no one on staff who is objective enough to facilitate a group, then other options should be considered, such as a peer facilitator—a staff member from a self help center in a nearby court. This can work especially well because similar program staff have related knowledge and background without being personally tied to the outcomes.

Notetaker: Even if a tape recorder is being used, there should be a minimum of two staff members at every focus group. In addition to maintaining an accurate record of the discussion, notetakers also record interactions, observations, and demographic data. The facilitator and the notetaker can discuss and compare notes on their observations following the session. Also, the presence of two staff persons provides more options should anything untoward happen during the focus group.

Recruiter: Identify the person responsible for recruiting and following up with participants. This person will need training on recruiting, including issues of preserving the safety and confidentiality of potential participants.

Step 9. Audio or Video Taping

Will your focus group(s) be audio or video taped?

Tips for taping:

If possible, focus groups should be taped. Although a notetaker will be present, there are a number of analyses that cannot be performed unless a transcript is available. No matter how competent, facilitators and notetakers go into the group with preconceptions that will affect what they hear and record, so the tape is the most objective record of the group.

Note: Everyone in the group must consent to being taped. Therefore, if the research plan calls for a text analysis of the transcript, recruiters should screen participants for willingness to be taped and exclude anyone who does not agree.

Audio taping is more frequently used than videotaping, although the latter provides more information for analysis (for instance, nonverbal reactions may show group agreement or disagreement with a member's statement). If you are going to videotape a focus group, written consent of the participants should be obtained.

Step 10. Selecting a Group Location

What are some actual spaces you could use for your focus group(s)?

Tips for locations:

Focus groups with professional populations are commonly held during business hours (often with a catered lunch in the afternoon) and often with the facilitator and notetaker traveling to one of the professionals' offices or the professionals meeting at the courthouse. However, courthouses and other offices often close at 5pm when most nonprofessional prospective participants are still at work and unavailable. A common way of overcoming this barrier is through contacting a local community center or partner that can provide a room in a location convenient for most customers. Regardless of where the focus group is held, the space should be:

- Safe – consider that some neighborhoods that are safe during the day are not safe in the evening.
- Private – if the group is scheduled to be conducted in a community center, consider visiting the center to ensure that the proposed meeting room is in a relatively private and quiet environment.
- Easily accessible – if there is no public transportation in the vicinity, consider providing door to door transportation.

Step 11. Analysis

After you have completed collecting your data, what type of analysis will you perform?

Tips for analysis:

Minimum analysis includes:
- Team debrief: Immediately following the group the notetaker and facilitator should discuss their impressions, themes, and any other relevant issues that came up during the group.
- Transcribe notes: The notetaker should transcribe notes within two days of the group session. The facilitator should read the notes and add to or embellish them as appropriate.
- Code notes for themes/summarize themes: Staff should be assigned to review any notes and categorize recurring themes.

If the group was taped, more extensive analysis can be performed:
- Listen to tape/fill out notes/pull quotes.
- Transcribe tape – a staff member, court reporter, or outside transcription service can be used.
- Code transcription – annotate the transcription, assigning a code for each theme.

Tips on presentation:
After you finished analyzing your data, you have to decide how to present it. Unlike quantitative data, which can be adequately presented in tables, focus group data is often best presented as a narrative—you are telling a story. You can use tables to visually represent information, such as how many groups were conducted and the characteristics of participants, but an

effective analysis tells your readers what you found out, why you were surprised (or not), and the implications of the information.

Step 12. Timeline

How much time do you have to effectively implement your research plan?

Focus groups can take time and effort to put together. In Part C, Tools, are both sample and blank timelines for you to consider and use.

Step 13. Budget

What is your budget, including any in-kind resources that will be devoted to this project?

Focus groups are a relatively inexpensive way of collecting rich and useful data. The more in-kind resources you have the lower your budget can be. If a free or inexpensive room is available, volunteers or staff are willing and able to facilitate and take notes, the court has good relationships with community based organizations, and peer partners, a possibly daunting budget becomes very manageable.

A budget worksheet is provided in Part C, Tools.

Part C. Tools.

The following are tools for you to use in the planning process.

- Timeline
- Budget
- Record Keeping
- Focus Group Checklist
- Sample Informed Consent Form

Sample Timeline

Timeline for Focus Groups with Self Help Center Customers

Tasks	August				September				October				November				December			
Develop Focus Group Guide																				
Meet with staff/stakeholders to identify relevant questions																				
Relevant parties review questions																				
Arrange Topics and develop follow up questions																				
Develop introduction and project statement																				
Develop Informed Consent statement																				
Identify/Train Facilitators																				
Identify Participants																				
Arrange Logistics (space, etc)																				
Recruit Participants																				
Purchase Incentives																				
Conduct Focus Groups																				
Analyze Data																				
Team Debrief																				
Transcribe Notes																				
Code Notes																				
Transcribe Tapes																				
Code Tapes																				
Write-up Data																				
Review Write-up																				
Report Data																				
Identify Lessons Learned for future projects																				
Update Focus Group Guide and Research Plan as new information presents itself and obstacles arise																				

Blank Timeline

How much time to I have from the planning stages to the reporting stages?																				
Tasks	Month1				Month2				Month3				Month4				Month5			
Develop Focus Group Guide																				
Meet with staff/stakeholders to identify relevant questions																				
Relevant parties review questions																				
Arrange Topics and develop follow up questions																				
Develop introduction and project statement																				
Develop Informed Consent statement																				
Identify/Train Facilitators																				
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Purchase Incentives																				
Conduct Focus Groups																				
Analyze Data																				
Team Debrief																				
Transcribe Notes																				
Code Notes																				
Transcribe Tapes																				
Code Tapes																				
Write-up Data																				
Review Write-up																				
Report Data																				
Identify Lessons Learned for future projects																				
Update Focus Group Guide and Research Plan as new information presents itself and obstacles arise																				

Notes:

Blank Budget

How much will it cost to to answer my research question?			
Item	**Cost**	**Subtotal**	**Notes**
Facilitator			
Notetaker			
Recruiter			
Space			
Travel			
Incentives			
25$ Gift Certificate for each participant			
Dinner for each Participant			
Supplies			
Tape recorder			
Tapes			
Miscellaneous			
Analysis			
Transcribing Notes			
Transcribing Tapes			
Coding notes			
Staff time			
Coding transcript			
Other analysis			
Total			

Notes:

Record Keeping: Sample Spreadsheet

This list was compiled through intercepting parents as they were waiting for their hearing during the first week of September

Name	Phone Number	Call #1	Notes	Call #2	Notes	Call #3	Notes	Additional Notes
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Will think about it	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	Called back on 9/4 and agreed to participate/Target Gift Certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Declined					Too busy
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Will think about it					Called back on 9/2 and agreed to participate/Safeway gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	No Answer	9/2/2005	No Answer	9/3/2005	No Answer	Replace name
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Declined					Cannot afford child care
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Declined					No transportation
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Will think about it	9/2/2005				Declined/no child care
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Safeway gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Agreed			Safeway gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	Called back on 9/4 and agreed to participate/Target Gift Certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Safeway gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Will think about it					
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Agreed			Best Buy gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Target gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Agreed			Vegitarian/Target gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Target gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Declined			Too busy
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Best Buy gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Target gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Will think about it					
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Agreed	9/3/2005		Best Buy gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Agreed					Safeway gift certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Declined					Too busy
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Agreed			Vegitarian/Best Buy
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	Called back on 9/5 and agreed to participate/Target Gift Certificate
Jane Doe	(212) 555-1212	9/1/2005	Machine/no mess	9/2/2005	Machine/no mess	9/3/2005	Left Voice Mail	Called back on 9/4 and Declined to participate/No transportation

Record Keeping: Spreadsheet

Name	Phone Number	Call #1 (date)	Notes	Call #2 (date)	Notes	Call #3 (date)	Notes	Additional Notes

Focus Group Checklist

Information to Participants

- ☐ Map and directions to facility
- ☐ Date and time of focus group

Handouts (Minimum 15 each)

- ☐ Incentive checks/gift cards
- ☐ Business cards of focus group leaders (for each participant)
- ☐ Informed Consent – either ready for signature if participants will agree in writing or in written form to read to give oral consent

Supplies

- ☐ Focus Group Guide
- ☐ Caterer/pizza/restaurant number/snacks and drinks
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Notepaper
- ☐ Name tents (on which participants can write their first names)
- ☐ Tape or video recorder (check it before you go to the session to make sure it works)
- ☐ Tapes
- ☐ Batteries for tape recorders

Other Relevant Items

- ☐ Travel Plans
- ☐ Schedule
- ☐ Phone numbers of key people at the office you may need to reach
- ☐ Hotel reservations, if appropriate

Put anything else that you may need for each group on this list. Designate a briefcase or shoulder bag as your "Focus Group Kit." Include this list in your kit and make sure to check off items before you go to every group.

Sample Adult Consent Form

(If the names of the participants are not needed for the Focus Group, the consent can be made orally during the session. Not keeping a written consent form would then be consistent with the decision not to record their names in any manner during the Focus Group.)

<< Insert Agency Name and Address/Print on Letterhead >>

<<Date>>

My name is <<interviewer name>> and I work as a <<interviewer role>> for the << agency name>>. <<Provide reason why agency is conducting the study>>. As part of that process, << agency name>> would like to find out from <<whom you wish to include in your study>> about <<describe the information you are collecting>>. I would like to invite you to participate in the <<interview/survey/etc.>>.

Your participation in the <<interview/survey/etc.>> is completely voluntary. It will not affect your case in any way. You may refuse to participate in the <<interview/survey/etc.>> or any part of the <<interview/survey/etc.>>. All the information you provide will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to the study. In reports, the information you give us will be combined with what we get from everyone who participates in these interviews.

If you take part in the <<interview/survey/etc.>>, you will be asked to do the following:
<<interview activities>>.

The <<interview/survey/etc.>> will be held <<where and when>>. <<With your permission, interviews will be audiotaped (if applicable)>>.

By participating, you will have the opportunity to provide our agency with important information about your experience to help us improve services to <<families and children, other groups served>>. <<Participants will also receive $X/a snack for participating (if you are offering incentives)>>.

If you have any questions about the study, you may write or call <<contact name and title>> at <<location and telephone number>>. Thank you for your participation!

By signing this form, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information provided about your participation in this <<interview/survey/etc.>>.

______________________________ _______________________
Signature of participant   Date

____
Participant name (please print)