

How to Organize and Conduct a Focus Group

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PART 3: EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN TREATMENT COURTS TRAINING SERIES

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In this webinar we will review:

General considerations for conducting focus groups

How to organize a focus group using a 'Template Focus Group Guide'

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Should I conduct a focus group?

Surveys, interviews, or focus groups?

In the chat box, let us know what your potential focus group topic is.

Example: how do Black men experience drug court?

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Who to invite

Specific demographic

Should I offer incentives???

Talking points for Invitation

- Issue: Black men are underrepresented in drug court and among those who participate, they are less likely to graduate.
- Purpose: better understand experiences of black men in drug court.
- Please share your thoughts and ideas about how to improve our program.
- *Incentive (if offered) community service credit, gift card, bus passes, etc.*
- When, where, how long

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Human Subjects Protections

A facilitator from a university will need approval from an Institutional Review Board.

What is my court's 'research' policy?

Are my focus groups research or a quality improvement initiative?

How do I plan to use the information collected? Will I publish results? Am I hoping to improve my program based on feedback?

Will participants include individuals under age 18?

Even if I don't need to have my focus group plans reviewed by an Institutional Review Board, how can I protect the participants?

Stress the voluntary nature of participation. Limit who can listen to recording and read transcript.

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How many people to invite

Ideal number of participants- 8

Number to invite- 10-12

Who delivers the invitation?

How many focus groups are needed?

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Who should facilitate the discussion

Program staff?

Someone from outside the treatment court program?

An outside researcher?

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Role of co-facilitator

Check recording devices

Take notes

Observe body language of participants

Ask follow up questions

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Focus group location

Courtroom, treatment office, community room

Somewhere convenient and safe for participants

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Materials needed

Drinks

Quiet food

Paper and pencils

Way to identify each participant (numbers or letters)

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How to record focus group discussion

2 digital recorders

Write out first couple of words??

Identify each speaker by code?

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What to expect from participants

It doesn't matter what you ask me, I have a point to make.

I really just came to listen and learn.

I love an audience and will talk as much as you let me.

Participant as advocate for_____

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Formulate discussion questions

Capture the range of experiences

Watch for your own biases

Avoid the socially expected response

Use words/phrases like 'how', 'why', 'help me understand', 'compare'

Avoid questions leading to yes/no responses

Avoid 'don't you think?', 'isn't it good?'

Identify lead questions and follow up questions but do not expect to ask all questions identified

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Engaging those who do not speak

Directly invite them to respond

Have paper /pencil available to write down thoughts

Watch body language (co-facilitator can assist)

Ask for a show of hands

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Analyzing content and producing useful results

Listening to recording and taking notes vs. transcribing and reading discussion

- Identify themes
- Highlight useful quotes.
- Use results in reports to staff or advisory boards, as marketing materials

Didn't want to be told what to do, when to do it and how to do it. I'm a man and I have been living on the street and I've been doing what I been doing to get by. So how dare somebody come and try to tell me how to live my life.

When you have been arrested and locked up you get used to a system. People enter drug court with the idea that its just like the rest of the system. There's unconscious distrust of anybody in authority positions.

Rules, rules, rules but no mention of benefits.

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Using the Template Focus Group Guide

PLEASE REFER TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION TOOLKIT, PP. 47-49 FOR EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED GUIDE. [HTTPS://WWW.NDCI.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2019/02/EQUITY-AND-INCLUSION-TOOLKIT.PDF](https://www.ndci.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/equity-and-inclusion-toolkit.pdf)

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Objectives

The focus group will elicit discussion on _____

Specific discussion areas will include _____

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Description of participants

Focus group(s) will be held with _____

*Participants will be selected with assistance from _____**

** provide talking points to use in inviting potential participants*

The group should include _____

Each focus group will include 8-10 participants. Aside from the participants, the focus group facilitator and a co-facilitator will be present.

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Description of the focus group

The participants and facilitators will sit around a table.

The co-facilitator will take notes and make sure the recording devices are functioning properly.

The facilitator will begin by introducing him/herself and explaining the purpose of the focus groups.

The discussion will last 60 to 90 minutes and be taped.

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Introduction

Thank participants.

Explain purpose of focus group

Set some ground rules:

- *We would like you to share your honest thoughts although you do not have to respond to every question.*
- *At times you may not agree with what someone else says.*
- *Please speak up and share your perspective.*
- *We would like to hear about the pros and cons of all ideas discussed today.*
- *Please be respectful of the opinions and experiences of the other participants.*
- *We have a limited amount of time so I might have to interrupt from time-to-time to keep things moving.*

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Fundamental Protections

- *Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer a question.*
- *Your identity will not be connected to your answers.*
- *We are recording the discussion but only the following people will listen to the recording:_____*

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Focus Group Discussion Guide

The following questions will provide the framework for the focus group discussion. While questions that are not listed here may be asked in order to follow-up on participants' responses, the focus group discussion will center on these main questions.

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General Format for Questions

Opening question serves as ice breaker and is the one time everyone will be asked to respond.

Introductory question launches group into topic.

Transition question begins deeper dive into the topic.

Key questions cover areas to be discussed and should be limited to 10 or less questions.

Ending question provides an opportunity for participants to make any other comments.

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Debriefing

I would like to thank you for your participation. The information you gave us today will be shared with _____ The information will help drug courts better respond to the needs of all participants.

Finally I would to provide you with a chance to ask questions that you might have about this research/initiative. Do you have any questions for me?

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Questions??
