

Sample group interview – Community member

PURPOSE: When might you conduct a group interview with community members?

- This is an interview that you may use in the process of conducting a community needs assessment to assess the community's perspective about sexual violence, its causes, what prevents it, and perspectives about services and supports available.
- This interview might be used to deepen the team's understanding about a particular service or issue related to sexual assault.

GOALS: What do you want to learn from the survey?

- What are community members' perceptions about sexual assault?
- How familiar are they with services available regarding sexual assault?
- How widespread or important an issue do they perceive it to be for the community?
- How well is it being addressed by the agencies involved, and where do they perceive there to be gaps in services?

PREPARATION STEPS:

- **Interview Set Up** – Identify a potential participant group for the interview, and engage key community or agency leadership in recruiting and encouraging participation.
- **Test Your Questions** – Run through questions a final time (with another person, if possible) to ensure they will elicit relevant responses, are in the proper order (general to specific), and make logical sense.
- **Send Reminders** – Send an email/phone call to remind participants about the day/time/location of interview.
- **Do You Have Everything?** – One quick check to make sure everything (name tags, poster paper, markers, recorder, etc.) is packed and ready to go.
- **Arrive Early** – Give yourself enough time to set up the room, food, or anything that needs to be taken care of before participants arrive.
- **Be Inviting** – Create a warm and friendly environment. You will not only make participants feel welcomed, but you will also put them at ease.

INTERVIEW SCRIPT OUTLINE:

- Welcome, make introductions, and thank participants
- Review the purpose of the focus group interview
- Review the ground rules
- Conversation
- Debrief

THE OPENING:

Welcome! I'm (Insert name here), and I'm going to be facilitating our conversation today. Our Assistant Facilitator (insert name here) will be documenting our conversation. I want to begin by thanking you all for taking the time to join us today. We want you to know how much we appreciate your participation and that the information you share will be put to good use.

As you know, we are here to learn more about your perceptions of sexual violence in the community and services available to address it. We are here representing the SART, which is made up of agencies involved in responding to sexual assault cases, including advocacy, prosecution, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and other community agencies.

Our hope is to deepen our understanding of how the community perceives sexual violence and the services available to address it. We're interested in your perceptions about what is working well, and what kinds of support and assistance might foster beneficial changes to addressing sexual violence.

As I mentioned before, (Insert AF Name) will be documenting our conversation, and diligently capturing the thoughts and opinions expressed today. We do this to aid our memory as we later try to recall and organize what you've shared with us. We want to accurately capture what you've said.

We want you to know that the information collected here will remain anonymous, and you will not be associated with any individual answer or comment. The more honest and candid your responses, the more useful it will be towards informing our multi-disciplinary team's process and outcomes. Responses will only be shared in summary form.

Does anyone have any questions before I go on?

Before we get started, let's talk about some guidelines for our time together. First of all, we will be asking about your opinions, ideas, and experiences, so there are no right or wrong answers. As I mentioned, (Insert AF Name) is going to be documenting the conversation, so it's important that only one person is speaking at a time, so that s/he can capture what's said. Your participation in this interview and the views you express will have no impact, positive or negative, on community services you are eligible for or with the agencies represented by the SART. Again, please share your views candidly.

We ask that everyone respect one another's privacy about what is said here by not sharing or discussing it outside of this conversation. There's no expectation that you'll agree with what others share, but it's important that everyone listen to all ideas shared, and that each person gets a chance to share their thoughts and ideas and be listened to. During the conversation, I'd ask that you direct your comments to one another, and not just to me. We'd like this to be a conversation with the full group.

At this time, I would ask that you each power off or silence your cell phones. If you must respond to a call, please separate from the group quietly and rejoin us as quickly as you're able.

Any final questions before we get started?

THE INTERVIEW / CONVERSATION:

- First, let's get started by asking what comes to your mind when you hear the words 'sexual violence'?
- What are some of the themes that you hear in the responses that have been shared?
- Do you think this is a pretty accurate depiction of what sexual violence generally looks like?
- Who do you think are perpetrators of sexual violence? What descriptors would you use?
- Who are victims? What descriptors would you use?
- Given all that we've talked about here, what do you think are some of the steps, services or something else that would be helpful in working to prevent sexual violence?
- What services are you aware of – where might you turn or direct someone you knew who had been sexually assaulted? What do you think might be missing? Are there gaps in services that you're aware of?
- If you could change anything, what do you think would be some effective ways to address the issue?
- How widespread a problem do you think sexual violence is in this community?
- Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and ideas with us. We will be preparing a report summarizing all of the information we've gathered throughout this process, and you can contact (agency) to inquire about a copy. Thank you for your participation in this effort.

INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Draw out all responses** – Allow ample time as well as silences, in order to hear all relevant thoughts and opinions. Don't rush through the questions, but be mindful of time.
- **Exercise flexibility** - Capitalize on unanticipated comments and useful directions the discussion may take. Explore and move flexibly into unplanned aspects of the topic, but be careful about unnecessary or irrelevant divergences.
- **Who isn't speaking** – After 1-3 questions, make note of quiet participants and ask if they have anything they'd like to share without putting them on the spot. This gives them an opening to join the conversation.
- **Summarize responses:** After the discussion from each question, summarize the response and check for validation of your summary. "So what I'm hearing is..." "Would it be safe to say..." "My understanding is..."

DEBRIEF WITH CO-FACILITATORS

- See the ["How to Conduct a Systematic Analysis Process"](#) section of [Group Interview Guide](#).