

Focus Group Protocol: Media and Message Development

Purpose: To gather information to make delivery of protective norm messages more effective. The youth themselves are our audience (market). The discussion groups are a form of market research. We will probably be asking some of the same questions of the school staff. Once the SNMC commences, the discussion groups may provide ongoing feedback to enhance and fine tune the message delivery. The group meeting should last 45-60 minutes.

Recruitment: Each group should consist of approximately 8-10 students, ideally equal numbers of boys and girls. Where possible, get a representative sample of students and avoid recruiting from one organization or group (e.g., volleyball team, student coalition group, etc.)

Preparation: The ideal room setup will allow for an in-person facilitator(s) to lead the discussion. To encourage student engagement, it is best if perceived authority figures are not present during the discussion.

Facilitator Instructions: Allow a few minutes for all students to arrive. Once the discussion has begun, it is not recommended to allow late students to enter. It is helpful for the facilitator to know the first names of the students so that they can call on them by name and ensure that no one is left out.

Where appropriate, further probe to better understand a response (e.g., "Can you say more about that?"). Allow for space after questions as they are all designed to be open-ended. Allow for a minimum of 10 seconds of silence then prompt with another open-ended question or call on individual youth. If needed, continue with closed-ended follow-up questions. If one or two people offer an idea, see what others would like to add before moving to the next question.

Suggested script to read aloud: "Hello I am _____. Thank you for being here. This discussion group will be easy and not too long. We would like to ask you all about how you get information at your school. There are a few simple rules for our discussion.

- The rules:
- 1- Everyone participates.
 - 2- One at a time.
 - 3- Short answers, not long stories. No repeats.
 - 4- There are no right or wrong answers.
 - 5- You can always "pass" if you do not want to answer or do not know how to answer."
 - 6- The group will start on time and latecomers will not be allowed to join.

Warm-up exercise: Begin with a warm-up exercise after stating the rules for discussion. Perhaps ask the group to name various breeds of dogs with no repeats. This is a simple task that is not gender biased. The purpose of the warm-up is to demonstrate the rules. The facilitator calls on each student to participate and reminds them that it is OK to pass. After all students have participated, the facilitator should conduct a second round. In the second round, one or more students will pass and all will become more comfortable with the rules.

Sample questions:

- How many of you completed the end of year school survey that asked about your attitudes and experiences with various substances or drugs?

For the next set of questions, imagine that we would like to share information with all students at [School Name].

- What are the different ways that you receive information your school or your peers are putting out?
 - a. Of those things, what are some specific examples of ones that grabbed your attention the most?
 - b. Are there any you saw that seemed like they didn't work?
 - c. What about it didn't feel like it worked for you?
- If we have posters or flyers containing information, where are the locations for best placement?
- About how long should we leave the posters or flyers on the wall before you get tired of seeing them?
- Would placing messages on lunchroom tables be a good idea? How about table tents?
- At some schools, the students liked reading the information in restroom stalls. Would that work here in your school?
- Do you have a school newspaper? Do you read it?
- What are other different ways you might notice information?
- Are there morning announcements or some other form of all school announcements? Is this a good way to get information out to all students?
- Which of the following would be a good way of getting information to you - that you actually pay attention to:
 - a. Emails
 - b. Text alerts
 - c. Virtual learning platform
 - d. School website
 - e. School-based mobile apps
- Who do you think is most believable for providing health information? For example, the principle, school nurse, resource officer, fellow students, teachers, counselors.
- How would you respond to something personalized to your school? Such as using school colors, logo, mascot, etc.
- How interested would you be in getting information about what most other students are interested in (e.g., activities, preferences)? What would you like to know?
- Do you prefer to see statistics displayed as ratios (8 out of 10), percentages (80%), or narrative (most)?
- Would you like to see information in different languages (e.g., Spanish)?
- Which of these two messages is most believable? Why?
 - a. Sample A:
 - b. Sample B:

The next set of questions can be used to pilot test media that has been developed.

- Which of these two [posters] do you prefer?
- Which is more attractive? Eye catching?
- Which is more believable? Why?
- Which is more positive?
- What do you think this [poster] is trying to convey?
- What changes would you suggest?