

Attachment N: Incentive Justification for Focus Group Participants

We consulted the two most recent annual surveys conducted by the website Urbansitter.org of parent members in order to estimate the average cost of hourly childcare for potential research participants. The 2016 study surveyed 15,000 parents from 9 metropolitan areas (Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Chicago, Boston, New York City, Washington DC) about the hourly rates they provide babysitters for caring for one, two, and three children. The 2017 study surveyed 20,000 parents from the same nine cities. As Table 2 below shows, the average rate for just one child was \$15.17 in 2016 and \$15.20 in 2017. We also calculated a rough average rate across a number of children for each year, creating an estimated average babysitting rate of **\$17.70** across the 2016 and 2017 surveys for one, two, and three children.

Table 1 - Hourly wage averages by # of children according to urbansitter.org annual member survey

| | 1 Child | 2 Children | 3 Children | Average |
|------|---------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| 2016 | \$15.71 | \$18.07 | \$20.31 | \$18.03 |
| 2017 | \$15.20 | \$17.34 | \$19.57 | \$17.37 |
| | | | Mean | \$17.70 |

We also consulted Care.com, an international web-based service that matches care providers with families seeking care. Care.com has a membership of over 14 million and provides suggested hourly rates for babysitters by postal code varying by the number of children. According to their 2016 membership survey, the average hourly child care rate is \$13.97, though the number of children was not specified in their survey results.

Given the range of figures provided by the available data sources, we propose using a conservative estimate of \$16.25 per hour for childcare, to ensure the cost of childcare for low-income families of varying family circumstances will not prohibit parents from participating.

To provide parents with a fair reimbursement for potential travel costs, we used the accepted GSA *Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Reimbursement Rate* of \$0.535 per mile to estimate an approximate cost as well as an approximation of travel distance. The national average for distance between a child’s home and childcare arrangement is 4.6 miles for children under 3 years of age, according to the National Survey of Early Care and Education¹. The resulting travel cost is \$4.92 for a round trip.

The total amount of time parents may require childcare is estimated at 2 hours, including travel to and from the facility, participation in the 60-minute focus group, and an early arrival time.

Based on previous research projects conducting focus groups with parents, parents are most often available during child care drop off (7-9 am) or pick up time (4-6 pm). As these times

¹ National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Fact Sheet: How Far Are Early Care and Education Arrangements from Children’s Homes? OPRE Report No. 2016-10, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education/sece-2010-2014>.

overlap with participant meal times, participants will likely have to purchase food to bring to the focus group. We are estimating that the average cost of a meal is \$10 per person.

The total resulting financial burden is therefore slightly less than \$50 per parent (\$16.25 x 2, plus \$4.92, plus \$10). We therefore strongly advise a \$50 incentive to cover the cost of childcare, travel necessary to participate in the focus group, and a meal.

To further illustrate the importance of using \$50, we compare two of our recent research projects conducted with similar audiences. The first project for CDC (CDC Department of Violence Prevention: Focus group research to inform the adaptation of messages to change social norms around corporal punishment, OMB# 0920-0572 CDC and ATSDR Health Message Testing System, Expired 03/31/2018.), where we conducted 13, 60-minute focus groups with low-income parents of children ages 0-5, hosted at community locations (i.e. schools, day cares, community centers). Parents were recruited through flyers, word-of-mouth, and social media posts. For this project, a \$50 incentive was used. The second project was for FNS (Formative Research to Revise Materials for Mothers and Child Care Providers of Infants), where we conducted 17, 60-minute focus groups with low-income moms that were either pregnant or had children under 2 years old. Focus groups were also hosted in community locations and moms were recruited using flyers² and word-of-mouth. For this project, we were not approved for \$50 incentives and instead used \$40.

Both projects used 60-minute focus groups held at the same time of day and in the same type of location. Recruitment methods were nearly identical and both projects recruited low-income parents of young children. Each study had slightly different eligibility requirements for focus group participation, however study eligibility does not affect the number of participants who complete screeners or show up to focus groups once invited. The table below compares these two variables to demonstrate the increased efficacy of using \$50 incentives.

| | Total Targeted ³ | Completed a Screener | | # Invited to Focus Groups | Showed to Focus Groups | | Mean # per group |
|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------|------------------|
| | | N | % | | N | % | |
| \$40 Incentive | 800 | 167 | 20.9% | 134 | 86 | 64.2% | 5.06 |
| \$50 Incentive | 490 | 228 | 46.5% | 98 | 75 | 76.5% | 5.77 |

The percentage of participants that completed a screener (46.5%) when \$50 was used as an incentive was more than double that of the \$40 incentive (20.9%). The show rate was also considerably lower when \$40 was offered (64.2%) compared to when \$50 was offered (76.5%). For the current project, we are targeting a limited pool of participants (i.e. parents with children attending research sites) and are attempting to recruit specific groups of parents (i.e. parents from select cultural backgrounds). In order to invite an adequate number of parents to the focus groups, we will need parents to complete screeners at a far higher rate than 20.9%.

² The layout for the FNS flyer was adapted from the CDC flyer.

³ Based on the sample of parents attending the institutions and community partners targeted in recruitment.

Given these considerations we strongly recommend utilizing a \$50 incentive to yield adequate recruitment and show rates for 5-6 parents in each focus group.