

Instructions for Site Visitors

This document contains the following sections:

1. Consent form
2. Participant information form
3. Introductory script
 - Introductions of facilitators
 - Purpose of focus group
 - Ground rules
4. Focus group questions

**Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program
Informed Consent Form to Participate in a Focus Group of Foster Parents of URM Youth**

MEF Associates and its partner, Child Trends, have been contracted by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. This form gives you information about the study to help you decide whether to participate in the study's focus group.

What is the study about?

The study's goal is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the URM Program. The focus group allows foster parents such as yourself to provide your perspectives on these services and benefits. Your input is very important to us and will help with this study.

What will I need to do?

We are asking you to be part of a focus group that will last about 90 minutes. A focus group is like a group interview, where people are asked questions about a topic. If you agree to be in the focus group, we will ask you about:

- Your interactions with the URM program in preparing to become a foster parent for an unaccompanied refugee minor youth
- Your experiences with the program in arranging a foster placement with you
- Supports and services the program has provided to you and the youth you have fostered
- Supports and services you and the youth you have fostered may have received elsewhere in the community
- Your overall satisfaction with services you received from the program

You will receive a \$30 gift card for participating in the group.

Will the focus group hurt me?

The main risk to being in the focus group is feeling uncomfortable discussing the youth you have fostered or your feelings in a group setting. You can choose not to answer any of the questions that make you uncomfortable.

Will the focus group help me?

The focus group will not help you directly, but sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the services offered through the URM Program.

Do I have to do the focus group?

You do not have to be in the focus group if you do not want to. You are free to leave even after we start. Your participation in the focus group will have no effect on services you or the youth you foster receive from the URM Program or any other organizations.

Will you tell people what I say?

The study team will not share your answers with anyone outside of this group or the study team and will keep your information private to the extent possible. We ask that you make that same commitment and not repeat what is said today outside of this group. When we write reports, we will put everyone's answers together and will not use names. We may use some specific quotes without people's names. However, please note that if you tell a member of the study team that you intend to hurt yourself or someone else, we will have to tell appropriate authorities.

We have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health. This means that we will not give to anyone or use any information or documents that may identify you in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other action, suit, or proceeding without your permission. However, even with the Certificate of Confidentiality, we would still have to release information in some situations required by law, such as if the researchers learn of child abuse and neglect, or harm to yourself or others.

The study team would like to record the group, if everyone agrees. We will destroy notes and recordings at the end of the project.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you may contact the project director, Sam Elkin at MEF Associates at 703-838-2722.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you may contact Child Trends' Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group that reviewed this study for your protection, at 1-855-288-3506, or via e-mail at irbparticipant@childtrends.org.

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to document features of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program and the provision of services to youth served by that program. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, collaboration, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is XXXX-XXXX and it expires XX/XX/XXXX.

Participant Information Form

1. What is your gender?
 - Man
 - Woman
 - Other: _____

2. In what country were you born? _____
(Name of Country)

3. What other countries have you lived in? _____
(Name of Country)

4. How would you describe your ethnicity? _____

5. Other than English, what languages do you speak fluently? _____

6. How many children have you fostered...
 - ...through the domestic foster care program? _____ (Of these, how many still live with you? _____)
 - ...through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor program? _____ (Of these, how many still live with you? _____)
 - ...through the Unaccompanied Alien Children program? _____ (Of these, how many still live with you? _____)
 - ...Other (please explain _____)? _____ (Of these, how many still live with you? _____)

7. Not including your foster children, how many adults and children currently live in your household?
 - Adults (18 or older, including yourself) _____
 - Children (under 18) _____

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Introductory Script for Focus Group of Foster Parents of URM Youth

Hello, my name is _____ and I'll be leading our discussion today. My job today is to ask a few questions and learn from you about your experiences. I'll jump in a few times to make sure the conversation keeps focused on what we are interested in learning about.

Thank you for being part of this focus group. We're conducting study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program. The study's goal is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the URM Program. The study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That is the agency that administers the URM Program, and funds organizations like [LOCAL PROGRAM NAME]. We are here today to learn more about the services the URM Program provides, your experiences with those services, and about how it might better serve the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. As a gift to thank you for your participation, you will receive a \$30 gift card.

They hired two outside groups to conduct this study, MEF Associates and Child Trends. I am from _____. I will be your facilitator for this session and _____ will be taking notes. We are taking notes and, if everyone in this room agrees, recording the session to make sure we get everything right, but your answers will not be linked with your name in any way. We will use the recording to fill in our written notes, but then the recording will be destroyed. If you want to say something that you do not want to be recorded, just say so and we will turn it off. We will not tell anyone from [LOCAL PROGRAM NAME] who said what in this meeting. To protect the identity of others, I ask that when talking about someone, you only use their first name, nickname, or call them by a title such as "foster child, sister, cousin, or brother."

We will do everything we can to keep everything you tell us private. However, privacy also depends on all of you. We **strongly request** that you and all other focus group participants not discuss what is said today with others outside of the group. However, we cannot guarantee that everyone here will follow this request. Also, please note that if you tell a member of the study team that you intend to hurt yourself or someone else, we will have to tell appropriate authorities.

Your participation today is voluntary. Your participation in the group will have no effect on the services that you or the youth you foster get from [NAME OF AGENCY]. Once we begin the focus group, you may choose to leave the group at any time, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

I'm not sure how many of you have been in a focus group before, but let me give a brief overview. As the facilitator, I will be asking questions, but I want the interaction to flow among you – let's have lots of open discussion. I encourage you to talk to and ask questions of each other. There may be times when I need to interrupt the conversation -- either to ask you to clarify something you said or to move the discussion on to another topic. Most people say they enjoy being in these groups.

Do you have any questions for me right now? If you have questions later, the phone numbers for at the study director from MEF Associates and the Child Trends Institutional Review Board are on the forms we have given you.

Does everyone here agree to participate in the focus group? If you do not want to participate, you are free to go. [By a show of hands make sure everyone agrees to participate.]

Is it ok with everyone in the room to record the focus group? We will only use the recording to fill in our notes. [By a show of hands make sure everyone agrees to record the session]

If NO ask: *Remember, we can pause the recording if you want to say something that you do not want recorded. Would you be ok with us recording the focus group if you have the choice to stop the recording later?*

If still NO: *That's ok. We won't record the group.*

Ground Rules:

Before we begin, let me go over a couple of focus group guidelines.

- *This discussion is meant to be informal and relaxed.*
- *We won't have any breaks, but if you need to get up to use the restroom, stretch or get a drink, please do so as needed. The restrooms are located [xxx].*
- *Please only tell us your first name. This will help us keep your information private. Please also refer to each other only by first name.*
- *During the discussion please ask me if something is not clear.*
- *There are no right or wrong answers. You can say positive and negative comments about your experiences.*
- *It is okay to share your opinions or thoughts even if they are different from what others have said. As I said, there are no right or wrong answers or comments. We want everyone to participate, and the opinions and experiences of everyone in the room are important. We want to hear different perspectives.*
- *Please talk one at a time so that I can hear everything that is said.*
- *I want to hear from all of you. Some people talk more than others, and I'll be encouraging everyone to speak up.*
- *You do not have to answer any specific questions you do not want to answer. If at any point, you want to pause the recording while you make a specific comment, please tell me.*
- *The discussion today is private. Please do not discuss or share anything you heard after you leave the focus group.*
- *If you have a cell phone, please turn it off or put it on vibrate mode.*

Do you have any questions before we start?

Focus Group Questions

Introductions

To introduce ourselves, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us four things: 1) your first name, 2) how long you have been a foster parent, 3) why you wanted to become a foster parent for an unaccompanied refugee minor, and 4) how many youth you are currently fostering and where they are from? *[Ask of all participants]*

I. Initial Interactions with the Program

1. Please tell us a little bit about how you learned about *[URM program organization]*.
 - a. Did you participate in any recruitment activities by *[URM program organization]* (like a recruitment fair, informational interview, etc.)? If so, please describe what.
2. What were your first interactions with *[URM program organization]* like?
3. What process did you go through to be eligible to become a foster parent for an unaccompanied refugee minor youth served by their program?
 - a. Had anyone previously been licensed as a foster parent for a domestic foster care placement? How did that affect the process to be eligible to become a foster parent for an unaccompanied refugee minor youth?
4. Can you please talk about the training that you underwent before you could become licensed?

Probe if needed on training on cultural competency.

Probe if anyone received training to serve as a therapeutic foster home, and if so, what it involved.

If anyone was first licensed to be a foster home for a domestic child welfare program, probe what additional training they received to be a foster home for the URM program.

- a. Please describe your thoughts on the training.
 - i. What was most helpful?
 - ii. Are there ways the training could be improved?

II. Placement

1. Let's talk about how the program worked with you to place a youth in your home. Please describe the process for me.
 - a. How do they match a particular youth with you?
2. How did you find out that a youth had been placed with you? Talk about your experience when you found out.
3. What challenges did you face in preparing for the youth to arrive?
 - a. What type of support or training did you receive from the URM program?

4. Can you talk a little about how you first met the youth placed with you?
5. Do you have a similar cultural background as the youth(s) placed with you?
 - a. How did that affect the experience of serving as a foster family for the youth?
6. Overall, how helpful do you feel the program was in arranging the placement and preparing you for serving as a foster parent for an unaccompanied refugee minor?
7. Are there other services they could have provided at this stage that would have been helpful?

III. Supports

1. What kind of things does *[URM program organization]* do to support you as a foster parent?
 - a. How often do you meet with program staff? What happens when you do? Were you assigned a specific case worker?
 - i. *[If any focus group participants have fostered multiple youth]* Had any of you worked with the same worker before?
 - b. What kinds of trainings or services has the program provided after placing the youth with your family?
 - c. What kinds of financial support does the program provide?
2. What has been the most helpful? What has been less helpful?
3. Are there supports that they do not provide (or provide enough of) that would be helpful?
4. What other supports do you receive to help you in your role as a foster parent? Where do you get them?

Probe on community groups, religious institutions, school system, and public child welfare system

- a. Do you belong to a support group (either formal or informal) of other foster families for URM?
 - i. If yes, can you please describe this group and how you work together?

IV. Services for Youth and Youth Well-Being

1. Overall, how has the youth(s) placed with you adjusted to living in the U.S., and to living with your family?
2. What have been their biggest challenges?

Probe, if needed, on language challenges, making friends, succeeding in school, things that are different here from their home country.
3. What are their biggest needs?
 - a. Which needs are unmet?
4. What kind of supports and services has *[URM program organization]* provided to the youths?

- a. How have you felt about these supports and services?
 - b. What has been the most helpful?
 - c. What has been less helpful?
 - d. Were there supports that your foster child needed but that the program did not provide?
5. What other supports or services are available for your foster child? Where do they get these supports?

Probe on community groups, religious institutions, school system, and public child welfare system

6. Can you please describe the characteristics of your local communities, such as...
- a. Local refugee communities
 - b. Local ethnic communities
 - c. Religious institutions
 - d. How welcoming is the community as a whole for refugee and immigrant youth? In what ways has that affected your foster child's adjustment to life in the U.S.?
7. Do you try to foster a connection between the URM youth in your home and their ethnic communities? If so, how?
8. What do you hope the youth who have been placed with you will achieve in the next five years? Ten years?
- Probe on: education, employment, mental health, immigration status, relationships, connections to community, connections to biological family*
9. What do you think the youth who have been placed with you hope to achieve?
- a. Do you feel that the services the youth who have been placed with you has received from the URM program will help them achieve these goals?

V. Satisfaction

1. Thinking about your experience with [URM program organization], how satisfied have you been overall with the services you have received? Why?

If needed to stimulate more discussion, probe by asking them to rate their satisfaction from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied.

2. One thing we are trying to learn from our study is how to measure how programs like [URM program organization] contribute to the success of the youth they have served. How would you define when a youth served by [URM program organization] had succeeded?
- a. By this definition, has your foster child succeeded?
 - b. Did [URM program organization] contribute to his/her success in this way? How?

3. Do you have any recommendations for the people who run programs so they can better help families like yours and the youths they foster?

VI. Conclusion

1. Before we end, is there anything else you could like to say that you wanted to say earlier, but didn't get to say?

Thank you very much for your time. We discussed a lot today. The information you shared will help the Administration for Children and Families and others who run programs like *[URM program organization]*.