COVID-19 Vaccines - Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Note-Taking Guide & Template

Focus group discussions (FGD) are an effective way to collect valuable information from communities about COVID-19 vaccines that can inform community education and vaccine roll-out efforts. This guide is intended for health departments, community-based organizations, and others who are interested in conducting FGDs. This guide and template is intended to accompany the FGD facilitation guide.

Responsibilities

The notetaker is responsible for:

- Taking an audio recording of the focus group discussion
- Taking notes during the discussion
- Using the recording afterwards to fill in gaps or make corrections as needed to their notes
- Uploading the recording and finalized notes

Safeguarding Participant Information

Staff have an obligation to safeguard confidential and private information. Confidential and private information is any information that is personal and discrete in nature and related to focus group participants. This includes personally identifiable information. Personally identifiable information is information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other information. For example, a participant's full name, a participant's name and phone number, a participant's name and arrival date, etc.

The following are steps to protect participant information: 1) Always be vigilant in keeping sensitive data secure and confidential; 2) Never share/discuss participants' sensitive data with others that are not permitted to view this information; 3) Never discuss participants' sensitive information in public or in an open space where others might overhear you; 4) Never leave your screen or open documents containing participant-related sensitive data

unattended; 5) Delete documents and files being stored on your computer and/ or other devices when asked to do so; 6) Never leave printouts of sensitive data–ensure they are always physically secured (e.g. in a locked drawer, cabinet, desk). In fact, you should refrain from printing out sensitive data all together. If you must print out information, shred printouts after the task is complete; 7) Report privacy incidents as soon as they occur.

To ensure that notes and audio recordings taken from the focus group discussions are stored safely, it is recommended that each focus group be given their own folder. The notetaker will upload the audio recording and their finalized notes to the folder after the focus group discussion. They must not email, fax or message the notes or recordings to anyone. A link to upload files to the folder will be shared with the notetaker by the team. The notetaker should store this link safely and must not share it with anyone, nor create a "Share Link" to the folder. The notetaker must delete the recordings and notes being stored on their computer and/or anywhere else outside of the folder when asked to do so.

Obtaining Consent

At the beginning of the focus group discussion, it is necessary for the facilitator to obtain informed verbal consent from participants. Informed consent is "permission granted in the knowledge of possible risks and benefits of participation." Informed consent ensures participants have the information they need to decide to or not to participate in the focus group discussion. To obtain informed verbal consent, the facilitator will read a script to participants about the focus group discussion, and will ask if they understand and agree to continue. If everyone agrees, the notetaker should select "yes" to the informed consent question(s) in this document below. If any individuals do not agree, the facilitator will ask them to leave the call. Once they have left the call, the notetaker should check the "yes" option to the informed consent question.

If any individual agrees to participate at the start of the focus group but decides to stop participating partway through, the facilitator will thank them for their time, then ask them if they agree to us using the responses that they have provided so far. If they do not agree, it is essential that the notetaker writes the individual's *first* name (*do not write down their full name*) in the "Additional notes" section at the end of the Notetaking Template, and notes that they left the discussion early and do not agree to having their responses used. The notetaker must then remove that individual's responses from their notes immediately after the focus group discussion. They must also make sure that the numbers entered into the "Total # of Participants" and "Men", "Women" and "Non-binary" fields in the table below do not include any individuals who do not agree to participate in the focus group discussion at the start of the session, nor any individuals who decide to withdraw partway through the

focus group discussion and do not give permission for use of their responses before withdrawing.

Instructions for Notetaking and Translation

Using the template below, the notetaker will record the responses of participants underneath each question. If follow-up questions or probes are asked, both these questions and the participants' responses will also be recorded underneath the original, pre-set question asked by the facilitator. It is essential that the notetaker identifies the participant that gave each response for any given question, follow-up question or probe using their *first name only*. It is important that:

- The full name of the participant must not be recorded anywhere in the notes.

- No other personally identifiable information should be recorded anywhere in the notes.

- The notetaker should record the first name of the participant next to the response that they are recording. For example, if the facilitator asked "What is your favorite color?", and "Sarah" responded that it is blue, the notetaker would write "Sarah: Blue"

- If two participants have the same first name, the notetaker should distinguish between them by adding the first initial of their surname. For example, "Sarah C.". The participant's full surname should not be written down anywhere in the notes.

Notes should be taken in the target language during the focus group discussion. The notetaker is additionally responsible for taking an audio recording of the focus group discussion. To ensure that participants remain anonymous, they must start the recording after participants have introduced themselves and should take an audio recording only (not a video recording). The notetaker must also make sure to stop the recording once the closing script is read by the facilitator, so that conversations that take place in the time allocated after the focus group discussion for participants to ask questions about the COVID-19 vaccine are not recorded. After the focus group discussion, the notetaker should use the audio recording to confirm that their notes are correct and fill in any gaps. The notetaker should then upload the recording and notes to their focus group's folder. Before they upload them, the notetaker must check that the notes do not contain any personally identifiable information about participants, nor the responses of individuals who withdraw from the focus group discussion partway through and do not consent to us using the responses that they had provided so far. They should then inform the appropriate party

that the files have been uploaded. Once the party has confirmed with the notetaker that they can access the audio recording and notes, they will ask the notetaker to delete any versions of the files being stored on their computer or elsewhere outside of the folder, so that the only versions that remain are the ones in the folder. It is essential that the notetaker keeps the notes and the recording very secure whilst they are being stored on their computer and/or other devices.

Record the following information before starting

Focus Group Discussion Information		
Focus Group Number:	Interview Date:	Facilitator Name: Notetaker Name: Interpreter Name:
Platform of Meeting ☐ Zoom ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Other:_____	Interpretation Necessary: ☐ Yes ☐ No	Focus group held with specific sub-group: ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, identity of sub-group:
Total # of Participants: Men: Women: Non-binary:	Language used by group:	

Notetaking Template

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Informed consent was obtained from parent/caregiver for participant(s) younger than 18 years: ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ N/A

Start Recording Interview on Zoom after introductions Remember to note down responses and both verbal agreement – i.e. yes, follow-up statements with more detail, etc. AND non-verbal agreement – i.e. nodding heads, etc.

Q.1: Overall, how do you and people in your community feel about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Probe: When it's available to you, do you think that people in your community will get the vaccine? Why or why not?

Probe: What do you or your community see as the benefits of getting vaccinated against COVID-19?

Probe: What do you or your community see as the downsides of getting vaccinated against COVID-19?

Probe: Does your community feel it is safe?

Q.2: What information have you and people within your community heard about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Probe: What kind of stories have you heard about the COVID vaccine?

Probe: Is it halal? (Adapt for other communities).

Probe: What does it contain and how does it work?

Probe: What is your understanding of the side effects?

Probe: When can you get the vaccine? Do you have an idea of how it will be provided?

Probe: What happens once you receive the vaccine? Do you still have to wear a mask or keep distance?

Q.3: What would prevent you and members of your community from getting the vaccine?

Probe: What concerns do you/ your community have about the vaccine?

Probe: What barriers could keep you from getting the vaccine? (e.g., access, childcare, transportation, etc.)

Q.4: For people in your community who might be hesitant about getting the vaccine, what would encourage them to get it?

Probe: What would make [your community] feel safe about getting a COVID-vaccine?

Probe: What information do people in your community wish they had about the vaccine?

Q.5: What would you recommend as the best way to communicate information about COVID-19 vaccines to your community?

Probe: Who would be the best person to share information about the vaccine or help teach people about a COVID vaccine?. Healthcare provider, family, friends, religious leaders?

Probe: What are the best ways to reach people in your community? (e.g., face-to-face, WhatsApp, Facebook, email, mail, phone/text, YouTube?)

Probe: Where do you and people in your community get information about COVID-19 vaccines?

Probe: Does your community prefer information to be written or spoken?

Additional notes: