

# Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention:

## A FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

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# Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV/STI Prevention: A FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose of this guide**

The purpose of this guide is to provide community-based organizations (CBOs) and other agencies with a means to collect qualitative data that will contribute to their understanding of local youth's sexual risk-taking behaviors and the factors (e.g., attitudes, knowledge, skills, norms, etc.) that determine these behaviors. Focus group discussions based on this guide should be conducted as part of a needs assessment to select a science-based pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention program. These data will also serve to guide practitioners in adapting the program they select so that it best fits the needs, interests and issues of the specific youth population to be served.

### **Contents of this guide**

This document is organized to provide guidelines regarding the basic steps involved in creating effective and realistic focus group protocols and conducting productive focus group discussions about sensitive topics with a variety of youth. To that end, the sections herein reflect the main steps that should be taken to implement a successful focus group study. These steps include:

1. Selecting a site
2. Developing a focus group protocol
3. Recruiting participants
4. Conducting focus group discussions
5. Analyzing the data and applying them for program selection and/or program adaptation

The Appendices section of this document includes several supplemental documents, including:

- A sample focus group discussion protocol
- A sample demographic survey
- A sample parent consent form
- A sample youth assent form
- A list of resources relevant to conducting focus group discussions and analyzing focus group data

## **Limitations of this guide**

This guide focuses primarily on providing users with tips and options for the creation of focus group protocols delving into specific topics related to teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention. The topics and questions provided have been reviewed by a range of CDC staff, researchers and community providers but have not been piloted in their current form, which is why local review and piloting of the protocols is highly recommended. Additionally, while the guide features recommendations regarding focus group recruitment, facilitation, data analysis and application of findings, users are strongly encouraged to supplement this with more detailed information from expert focus group resources (such as those listed in Appendix E), as well as work collaboratively with individuals with specific training and experience in data collection, analysis, program selection and adaptation.

## **STEPS FOR CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS REGARDING TEEN PREGNANCY AND HIV/STI PREVENTION**

The steps that follow are all vital to the successful collection of focus group data. Before you begin to take action, it is important to review all of these steps first and make necessary decisions about how to spend limited resources, narrow the focus of your study, budget your time, delegate responsibilities and identify available resources and experts who can assist you as needed. The specific steps covered are:

1. Selecting a site
2. Developing a focus group protocol
3. Recruiting participants
4. Conducting focus group discussions
5. Analyzing the data and applying them for program selection and/or program adaptation

### **1) SELECT A SITE**

When selecting a site to hold your focus group discussions it is optimal to choose a location that will encourage attendance and open participation by youth. The following characteristics can facilitate this:

- Easy access using public transportation
- A central location, and/or a location that is well-known to participants
- An environment where participants feel safe and comfortable sharing sensitive information
- Enough space for the participants to sit around a table without distractions
- Sufficient acoustics (and limited outside noise) so everyone can be heard
- Ability to serve snacks and beverages

## 2) DEVELOP THE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Developing a focus group protocol (which is a detailed guide used during focus group facilitation) involves five critical steps including: 1) identifying your objectives (i.e., what is it that you want to learn from the youth); 2) selecting topics and questions; 3) creating the protocol; 4) having the protocol reviewed; and 5) pilot-testing the protocol. Each of these steps is addressed below.

### **Identify your objectives**

The more thought and effort you put into selecting the objectives for data collection in general and your focus group discussions in particular, the more likely you are to collect quality information that will be useful as you select and adapt a science-based program. A few basic questions can help you narrow your inquiry to what you really need to know (while setting aside what would be nice to know).

**a. What is the geographic and social "community" you will be serving?** It is likely that you will not be aiming to serve all youth in your area; instead, you might be focusing on youth in a particular neighborhood and/or socioeconomic level, youth of color (or a particular race or ethnic group), or just females or males. Once you have clarified this, think about any variations within that group that would be important to take into account when selecting your questions and participants. For instance, within any group it is important to separate youth into groups based on gender and age (e.g., do not mix boys and girls in the same focus group because their issues are different and they may not feel comfortable sharing in front of each other, and do not mix youth of different ages in the same focus group because they are at different developmental and comfort levels).

**b. What do you want to know about the particular community of youth?** This guide includes several topics you can choose from pertaining to youth sexual norms, culture, knowledge, attitudes and self-efficacy that affect pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention efforts. Your job is to identify the ones that are most pertinent to providing you with the insight you need to select and/or adapt a prevention program aligned with your objectives.

**c. What relevant information is already available?** It saves a great deal of time and effort to draw on existing information and community resources as you make decisions about collecting data to fill in the gaps. Once you know what information is accessible and useful (this might include existing needs assessment data, surveys previously completed by youth and anecdotal information from agency staff and other community folks who work with youth), you can better formulate the questions that will yield new and valuable data.

**d. What resources are available?** Once you have an idea of what you know and want to know, it is important to take account of how much money, time and staff are available so that you can make more realistic decisions about scheduling focus group discussions, recruiting participants, compensating participants, purchasing snacks and beverages, developing the protocol, conducting the focus group discussions and analyzing the data. Understanding the resources available will help you assess how many focus groups you can actually conduct.

**e. What are your main topics and questions?** Drawing on what you want to know, you can turn to the list of ten topics and related questions (these are in the section on creating the protocol below) to assess which are most appropriate for your needs. Because it is recommended that focus groups with youth last about an hour (and no longer than an hour and a half), it is especially important to narrow the number of topics to one or two, and choose 3-5 questions per topic; this should allow sufficient time for the other essential elements in a focus group discussion (e.g., introduction, group agreements, etc.), described in the next section.

### **Create the protocol**

As indicated above, every focus group discussion needs to include essential elements that help participants feel comfortable answering sensitive questions and achieve a sense of closure before they leave. These elements include:

1. An introduction that describes the purpose of the study and focus group
2. Group agreements about participant conduct during the discussion
3. A neutral ice-breaker question to help participants and facilitators get to know each other
4. Main questions based on the topic(s) selected
5. One or two wrap-up questions to mark the end of the discussion and give participants one more chance to share their thoughts and opinions

A sample protocol featuring standard language for each element is featured in Appendix A.

*A few protocol creation tips:* When you create your protocol, begin discussion of each new topic with an introductory phrase, such as “I’d like to start by talking about what teens do in their leisure time,” or “Now I’d like us to discuss what teens think about contraceptives.” Also, it is important not to make drastic changes in the phrasing of the questions provided here and to use the same wording during every focus group discussion to ensure that participants in all discussions using the same protocol are responding to the same questions.

## **Select your topics and questions**

Below are ten topics (and their corresponding questions and probes, which are designed to get more detail when needed) to consider when determining what your one or two topic(s) and main questions will be; keep in mind that because each topic section is a different length, you have some room for creativity, such as choosing all questions from a longer topic section or choosing a couple short topic sections, for example. Still, as explained above, it is critical that you limit the number of questions asked so that you have enough time to explore each issue thoroughly while not rushing your participants. If you have time and resources to conduct several focus group discussions, you may want to develop more than one protocol so that you can cover some topics with some groups and some topics with other groups.

### **TOPIC #1: HOW TEENS SPEND THEIR LEISURE TIME**

- How do the teens you know spend their free time?  
PROBES:
  - What do the teens you know do after school?
  - What do the teens you know do on the weekends?
- With whom do teens hang out?
- Where do teens hang out?

### **TOPIC #2: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PREGNANCY AND HIV/STI PREVENTION**

*[Before you start, define HIV and STI for the group.]*

- What have you learned about HIV/STI prevention and pregnancy prevention?  
PROBES:
  - How can you get STIs?
  - What are the best ways to prevent getting an STI or getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant?
- Where did you get your information about pregnancy and/or STIs? (e.g., family member, friends, the media, school, doctors/nurses)
- What did you learn from each source you mentioned?
- Given what you already know about HIV/STI and pregnancy prevention, what would you like to know more about?
- What are some things you've heard teens say about sex and/or HIV and pregnancy prevention that you know aren't true?

- What do you think teens need to know about HIV, STIs and teen pregnancy prevention?

### **TOPIC #3: PERCEPTION OF PEER NORMS AND BEHAVIOR ABOUT SEX**

- Do you think teens you know are having sex?  
PROBE: If yes, what percentage of them do you think are having sex?
- Would you say the teens you know plan to have sex or is it often unplanned, meaning “it just happens?”  
PROBES:  
-In what kinds of places and situations do teens you know have sex?  
-In what kinds of places and situations do teens you know have unprotected sex?
- According to the teens you know, what are some of the benefits of having sex?
- According to the teens you know, what are some of the reasons not to have sex?
- What keeps some teens you know from having sex?  
PROBE: What are some ways in which some teens' goals for the future might keep them from having sex?
- What do other teens think about teens who plan to wait to have sex?
- How do teens you know decide whom to have sex with and when in a relationship to have sex?
- Do decisions about having sex vary depending on the type of sex (e.g., is it easier to make decisions about certain types of sex?)? In what ways? Which types of sex?
- What kinds of pressures do teens feel to have sex?  
PROBE: What kinds of pressure do teens put on other teens to have sex? What kind of pressure do boys or girls put on their girlfriends or boyfriends to have sex?
- What are some of the reasons that teens you know have unintended/unplanned sex? In what kinds of situations does it happen?
- What are the reasons that teens you know would have unwanted sex? In what kinds of situations does it happen?
- What are some of the things teens you know do to avoid unintended and/or unwanted sex?
- How common do you think it is for teens you know to avoid places and situations that might lead to them having sex? What are some ways they might do this?

PROBES FOR TERMINOLOGY:

- What do teens call sex?
- Do they call sex different things depending on the situation—such as with a boyfriend or girlfriend as compared to a friend or acquaintance?
- Do they call protected sex something different from what they call unprotected sex?
- What do teens call their boyfriends or girlfriends?

**TOPIC #4: PERCEPTION OF HIV AND PREGNANCY RISK**

- How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant if they have sex?
- How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting an STI if they have sex?
- How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting HIV if they have sex?
- Do you think the teens you know are doing things that put them at risk for getting pregnant/getting HIV or STIs? In what ways are they putting themselves at risk?
- In your opinion, what are some of the consequences of getting an STI or HIV?
- What are some of the consequences of becoming or getting someone pregnant?

**TOPIC #5: PROTECTION AGAINST HIV/STIS AND PREGNANCY**

- Do teens you know protect themselves from pregnancy, HIV and STIs? In what ways? How often?
- How much do teens you know talk about what type of protection they use?
- Are some types of sex considered safer from STIs than others? What makes them safer?

**TOPIC #6: ATTITUDES ABOUT CONDOMS**

- What do teens you know think of condoms?
- How likely are teens you know to want to use condoms?
- How likely are teens you know to actually use condoms?
- What are some of the things that make it less likely for teens you know to use condoms?

PROBE:

What are some of the barriers to using condoms? Why don't teens use condoms every time?

- When do teens use condoms? When do they not use them or stop using them?

PROBE: With whom do teens use condoms?

- Where do teens you know get condoms?
- Is it difficult for teens you know to get condoms? If so, for what reasons?
- Where do teens you know learn how to use condoms?
- How often do teens you know carry condoms? Is it different for guys and girls?
- How are teens who carry condoms viewed by other teens?

PROBE FOR TERMINOLOGY: What names do teens use to refer to condoms?

## **TOPIC #7: ATTITUDES ABOUT CONDOMS AND OTHER CONTRACEPTIVES**

*[Before you begin, define contraceptives: contraceptives are things people use to prevent pregnancy like birth control pills.]*

- What do teens you know think of contraceptives?
- How likely are teens you know to want to use contraceptives?
- How likely are teens you know to actually use contraceptives? Which kinds?
- What are some of the things that make it less likely for teens you know to use contraceptives?  
PROBE: What are some of the barriers to using contraceptives? Why don't teens you know use them every time/consistently?
- When do teens you know use contraceptives? When do they not use them or stop using them?
- Where do teens you know get contraceptives?
- Is it difficult for teens you know to get contraceptives?
- How are teens who use contraceptives viewed by other teens?

## **TOPIC #8: PERSONAL VALUES ABOUT SEX AND ABSTINENCE; INTENTION TO ABSTAIN FROM SEX OR TO RESTRICT NUMBER OF SEX PARTNERS**

- Do you think many teens you know choose not to have sex (i.e., abstain from having

sex)?

- What are some of the personal reasons that teens you know give for abstaining from sex (e.g., moral values, concerns about getting pregnant, etc.)?
- How do they manage to abstain when there are pressures to have sex?

**Now let's talk about teens who have multiple sex partners.**

- What do teens you know think of males and females who have sex with multiple partners?  
PROBE: Are there different views about males and females?
- What might be the ways in which teens differentiate casual sex (meaning sex with a friend or acquaintance) from sex with a boyfriend or a girlfriend?

**TOPIC #9: SELF-EFFICACY TO REFUSE SEX AND TO USE CONDOMS**

- How confident are teens that they can avoid having sex if they don't want to have sex?  
PROBES:
  - How easy is it for teens to say no to sex when they don't want to have sex but their partner does?
  - What affects their level of confidence?
  - Does their confidence level depend on the situation (e.g. if they really love someone and are pressured, if they have had too much to drink, etc.)?
- How confident are teens you know that they can make sure they use a condom when they want to use one?  
PROBES:
  - How easy is it for teens to say no to sex or insist on using a condom when they want to use a condom but their partner does not?
  - What affects their confidence level?
  - Does their confidence level depend on the situation? (e.g. if they really love someone and are pressured, if they have had too much to drink, etc.)?

**TOPIC #10: COMFORT LEVEL TALKING TO PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS ABOUT SEX AND PREVENTION**

- How comfortable are you talking to your parents or other adults about sex, condoms and contraception?  
PROBES:
  - What makes you comfortable?
  - What makes you uncomfortable?
- What have you learned from your parents and other adults that was helpful? What wasn't helpful?

- How could your parents and other adults be more helpful?

### **Have the protocol reviewed**

After drafting the complete protocol (including all elements presented in Appendix A) it is important to have it reviewed by a group of people with knowledge about data collection and the population being served. Ideally, it would be reviewed by an Internal Review Board (IRB) (whose responsibility it is to review and approve all data collection efforts involving human subjects) or an advisory board; if your agency does not have either of these, you can form a group of service providers from your agency and the community to review the protocol and provide feedback.

### **Pilot test the protocol**

A useful approach to fine-tuning a protocol is to pilot test it before conducting formal focus group discussions. Pilot-testing is a way to try out the questions with a group of participants similar to those who will participate in the discussions to see how the questions work, find out if participants are able to answer the questions in ways that yield the information you need and ascertain how long the discussion will take. At the very least, bring together two or three vocal youth and try out the questions with them; as you move through the questions (or at the end of the discussion) ask them for specific feedback on the questions and seek advice for improving them. Next, revise the protocol based on the participants' comments and suggestions.

## **3) RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS**

Recruiting participants involves deciding how many and what types of participants you will recruit and finding easy ways to locate potential participants, as discussed below.

### **Decide on the number and types of groups you will conduct**

The best way to assure you have collected as much relevant information as possible is to conduct multiple focus group discussions until you are not hearing anything new. However, limited resources may not allow for this, in which case you should conduct at least three focus group discussions using each protocol you develop. As mentioned earlier, it is always important to separate the youth by gender and age so that they will be as comfortable as possible sharing sensitive information. If factors such as race/ ethnicity and socioeconomic level are important for your purposes, you can further refine your recruitment efforts to bring together African American girls who are 13-14 years old and live in a low-income neighborhood, for example.

### **Recruit participants**

The ideal number of youth to have in each focus group discussion is 6-10. This means recruiting about 8-10 participants so that you still have enough if a few youth who signed up do not attend. A common way to recruit youth is to ask agency staff, other providers and youth you know to help identify additional youth who might be willing to participate. It also helps to tell potential participants that you will be providing incentives such as food and gift certificates. (For additional recruiting suggestions and approaches, consult the resources in Appendix E.)

## **4) CONDUCT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Conducting focus group discussions is a multi-faceted endeavor. It requires finding a qualified facilitator, preparing materials ahead of time, setting up the room (with flip charts, food, tables and chairs), obtaining parental consent and youth assent, lining up resources to support the youth should they want to talk to someone about their feelings following the group, obtaining and testing a tape recorder (as it is ideal to capture what is said on tape, unless one or more participants expresses discomfort with it) and purchasing food and appropriate incentives. These are discussed in more detail below, and a check-list of tasks is featured at the end of this section.

### **Identify an experienced focus group facilitator**

Given that the questions in this guide are very sensitive, it is vital that youth feel comfortable and safe answering them honestly. For these reasons, it is essential that CBOs use an experienced focus group facilitator to run the discussions. Ideally, the facilitator should be someone the youth do not know so that they do not feel uncomfortable sharing sensitive information with someone they will see again.

### **Distribute and collect parent consent forms and youth assent forms for all participants**

It is critical to obtain parental consent and youth assent for all youth participating in your focus group discussions. Obtaining parental consent requires disseminating consent forms to participants' parents (usually by giving them to participants to deliver to their parents) ahead of time and reminding participants to bring the signed forms when they come to the discussion. To obtain youth assent, hand out assent forms to all youth right before the focus group begins; it is recommended that you read the assent forms out loud to ensure that everyone understands what they are signing. Even if the youth have parental consent, they need to sign their own assent forms to participate in the discussion and should be excused if they are not comfortable doing so. (Sample consent and assent forms are Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively.)

### **Collect demographic data from all participants**

Collecting some basic demographic information about your focus group participants will help you better describe who contributed to your data when your report and apply your findings. It works well to have the youth fill out the demographic survey after they have signed assent forms and before the discussion begins. As with the assent form, it is recommended that you read the questions out loud, allowing participants time to respond in writing to each one. (A sample demographic survey is in Appendix B.)

### **Have resources available to support youth participants**

Given that questions in this guide could cause emotional reactions among youth participants, it is necessary to plan for this possibility ahead of time by having someone on hand with whom the youth would feel comfortable sharing their feelings during or following the focus group discussion. Alternatively (or in addition), you could give participants a list of resources (organizations or individuals) to contact to discuss their feelings should the need arise.

### **Have HIV/STI and pregnancy informational materials available**

Some of the information about pregnancy, HIV and other STIs shared by youth during the focus group discussions may be incorrect. To counter this, bring and hand out written materials with correct HIV/STI and pregnancy.

### **Compensate participants for their time**

Participating youth should be compensated for their time and effort with incentives; one effective approach is to give them \$10 gift certificates to popular local businesses (i.e., fast food restaurants and music stores).

### **Refer to a check-list to keep you on track**

Organizing a focus group discussion takes some forethought and practice. Following is a list of the many tasks that cut across the steps covered in this guide. You can use it as a check-list to help the process go smoothly.

- Identify your objectives and select your topic(s) and questions
- Create your protocol to include all essential elements and have it reviewed by a group of informed individuals
- Pilot-test the protocol with a small group of youth
- Make changes in the protocol based on review and pilot test comments
- Prepare all materials ahead of time (e.g., flip charts showing agreements regarding participant conduct, a sign-in sheet, consent and assent forms, demographic surveys, hand-outs listing resources, hand-outs with teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention information, a tape recorder that works, tapes, a strong microphone, extension cords and a notepad and pen)
- Identify an appropriate location

- Identify an experienced facilitator to conduct the discussion
- Identify an assistant facilitator/note-taker (see the last bullet for assistant facilitator responsibilities)
- Recruit 8-10 participants for each group about two weeks ahead of time
- At the time of recruitment, disseminate parent consent forms to all youth who plan to participate
- Call participants a few days before the discussion to remind them about the date, time and location of the discussion; also remind them to bring signed parent consent forms
- Purchase snacks, beverages and incentives
- If you are the facilitator or assistant facilitator, become very familiar with the guide
- The assistant facilitator/note-taker is responsible for the following during and immediately following the discussion:
  - 1) Set up the food, materials and tape-recorder
  - 2) Post flip charts
  - 3) Ensure that participants sign in on the sign-in sheet
  - 4) Collect parent consent forms
  - 5) Disseminate, read aloud and collect youth assent forms
  - 6) Escort from the room youth who cannot participate due to absence of a parent consent form or refusal to sign an assent form
  - 7) Disseminate, read aloud and collect the demographic survey
  - 8) Turn on the tape-recorder after the facilitator has obtained permission to record the discussion and before s/he begins asking focus group question
  - 9) Monitor the tape-recorder throughout the discussion to be sure it is working and the tape does not run out; remind the youth to speak loudly; label each tape so it is clear what the contents are
  - 10) Take notes during the discussion to capture key comments and themes
  - 11) Assist the facilitator as needed to keep the discussion on-track
  - 12) Debrief with the facilitator following the discussion to identify and flesh out key themes and issues while they are still fresh
  - 13) Type up the notes as soon as possible following the discussion
  - 14) Transcribe (or have transcribed) the recording of the discussion

## **5) ANALYZE THE DATA AND APPLY THEM FOR PROGRAM SELECTION**

Now is the time to make sense of all the comments and ideas shared with you during focus group discussions. Analyzing data is complicated, so the guidelines provided here are just that; they provide a general description of what to look for when you compile your data, but are not meant to be your only resource. It is highly recommended that you find an experienced researcher or group of

people to analyze the data as well as make decisions about how to apply them in the selection of an appropriate program. It is also valuable to refer to resources such as Krueger and Casey (2000) and the web-based First 5 Focus Group Basics Course (both of which were referenced in the development of this guide and are cited on the resource list in Appendix E). Moreover, it is vital to remember that there are limitations to the data, as explained below.

### **Find an experienced researcher or group of people to analyze the data**

Given that the data from the focus group discussion will be used to select a program (and could inform adaptation of the intervention to fit your agency and community needs), it is ideal to involve a researcher trained in qualitative data collection and analysis to analyze the data and work with your staff to identify ways to adapt the curriculum. If it is not possible to involve a researcher, it is recommended that you form a team of 3-4 staff and/or community folks to work together to analyze the data (after you have deleted participant names and any other identifiers).

### **Remember the limitations of focus group data**

Focus group data are limited for several reasons. First, the number of participants in focus group discussions is small and the participants are not selected randomly. This means that the findings are not statistically representative of any particular group, so conclusions based on the data should only refer to the participants themselves and not to the population in general. Further, because focus group discussions are designed to identify themes raised by participants and not capture the exact level of agreement among participants, it is not appropriate to use counts and percents to refer to what focus group participants said or implied.

### **Follow basic steps when analyzing focus group data**

While focus group data are limited in several ways, they are extremely valuable in their ability to shed light on themes and sub-themes within and across groups. Working with someone trained in focus group data analysis and referring to resources will increase your success in interpreting the data systematically and correctly.

As an overview, there are three basic activities to implement when using analyzing the information in focus group discussion transcripts and notes:

- For each focus group question, combine the answers from all participants in all groups
- Categorize similar answers to identify common themes and sub-themes
- Review answers and categories to identify trends, patterns and outliers (values or opinions that are different from the majority), as well as differences between subpopulations

**Tabulate the demographic data**

The data collected through the demographic survey will be useful when you report and apply your focus group findings. Tabulating the data for each focus group discussion--and across discussions--will enable you to account for the age, grade level, gender, race and language of the youth who participated in the study and may inform some decisions about the needs and interests of different types of youth you will be serving.

**Use the findings to contribute to your efforts to select an appropriate program**

Your findings from the focus group discussions should be combined with findings from other needs assessment and data collection activities to make informed decisions about which science-based program(s) for youth would be most appropriate in your community. As with other steps outlined in this guide, this task should be conducted with assistance from people with experience in program selection and adaptation.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention

#### Sample Focus Group Protocol

Date:	
Organization Name:	
Location of Group:	
Facilitator:	
Note Taker:	
Time Focus Group Started: Ended:	
Number of Participants:	
Type of Group (e.g., were participants selected based on age, gender, race, etc.?)	

**Note to Facilitator and Assistant Facilitator/Note-taker:**

- Have snacks available for participants as they arrive. Invite participants to help themselves to snacks and beverages.
- Post the flip chart listing agreements regarding participant conduct during the discussion.
- Have all participants sign in on a sign-in sheet.
- Double-check parent consent forms to be sure all participants have them before allowing participation in the focus group discussion.
- Make sure participants complete an assent form and demographic survey before beginning the discussion.

**Objectives:**

- To obtain teens' input on key issues facing youth their age, particularly those related to preventing teen pregnancy, HIV and other STIs.
- [Add your specific objectives here.]

<p><b>A. Introduction</b></p> <p>Allow approximately 10 minutes for the introduction and agreements.</p> <p><i>Throughout the session continue to stress the point that we want to know their opinions about <b>how they feel not what their parents or other adults think.</b></i></p> <p><i>Hand out and explain assent forms.</i></p> <p><i>If there is any discomfort with recording, do not tape the session.</i></p>	<p>Hi, I'm _____ and this is _____. We are from _____. We want to thank you for joining us today. We're selecting programs for youth your age to help them avoid unplanned pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. We are talking with small groups of youth like you to make sure our programs address what youth feel are important issues. We will use your thoughts and ideas to help us develop [or improve] our program.</p> <p>Before we get started we are going to pass out and read this assent form. This provides information about what we will be doing today in the discussion group. It also gives you a chance to decide if you are willing to take part in today's group or not.</p> <p><i>[Pass out assent forms. Read form and have participants read along. Have participants fill out the bottom part of the form based on their decision to take part or not. If participants choose not to take part, thank them for coming and have the note taker escort them out. Pass out the demographic survey and have all participants complete and return one. Read the items out loud and allow time for participants to respond to each question.]</i></p> <p>We would like to tape record today's conversation. This helps us remember what you said. The tapes will be kept in our office. Nobody else will hear them. Is there anyone who would prefer that we not tape-record our conversation? <i>[If nobody objects, turn on the tape recorder now. If anyone objects do not use the tape recorder.]</i></p> <p>Today's discussion will last about 60 (or 90) minutes. We really appreciate your help. The information you share will help us create the best program we can. Everything we talk about will be confidential. This means that we will use general ideas from our conversations in a report but there will not be any names used and no one will know specifically who said what. Are there any questions about today?</p>
<p><b>Agreements</b></p> <p>These agreements should also be written on flipchart paper</p>	<p>Next, we'd like to go over a few agreements that will help guide our conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please talk <b>one at a time</b> and <b>speak up</b> as much as</li> </ul>

<p>and posted so youth and facilitators can refer to them throughout the discussion as needed.</p>	<p>much as possible. This will make it easier for us to hear each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel free to respond to each other about these topics, not just answer my questions. This will help us have a good discussion about each topic.</li> <li>• Please <b>respect</b> one another's opinions. There will be a range of opinions and experiences on the topics, and we do not expect everyone to agree with each other. We do, however, ask that everybody show respect when others are talking. What are some ways we can show respect to others?</li> <li>• We would like today's discussion to be as <b>confidential as possible</b>. This means that, ideally, you won't talk outside this room about what was said here today. If you do talk about what was said here to others, you should not use any names. Also, please don't say anything that you don't want others to know.</li> <li>• Because we only have 60 (or 90) minutes, we may have to shorten the discussion and move on to another question.</li> <li>• Are there any other agreements we should include to help guide our discussion today?</li> <li>• Are there any questions about today's discussion before we get started?</li> <li>• If any questions come up for you during the discussion please feel free to ask them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B. Icebreaker</b></p> <p>Allow approximately 5 minutes for this section.</p> <p><i>The group facilitators should go first. Have fun with this! Try to make it conversational.</i></p>	<p>Let's begin. We've placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's first names so we can call each other by first names during the discussion. You can choose a name other than your own if you'd like. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table and introducing ourselves.</p> <p>Please give your first name and, just for fun, tell us one of your favorite foods. I will start... My name is _____ and one of my favorite food is _____.</p>

MODERATOR TIPS	QUESTIONS
<p><b>C. Main Questions</b></p> <p><b>C1. Knowledge about HIV/STI Pregnancy Prevention</b></p> <p>Allow approximately 15 minutes for this section.</p> <p><i>In this section it is very important to find out teens' level of comfort with learning about these issues from parents and other adults.</i></p>	<p><b>Now we will start our group discussion.</b></p> <p><b>First I'd like to talk about teens' knowledge about pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What have you learned about pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention ?</li> </ol> <p><b>PROBES:</b> How can you get STIs? What are the best ways to prevent getting an STI or getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Where did you get the information? (e.g., family member, friends, the media, school, doctors/nurses)</li> <li>3. Given what you already know about pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention, what would you like to know more about?</li> <li>4. What are some things you've heard teens say about sex and/or pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention that you know aren't true?</li> <li>5. What do you think teens need to know about teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention?</li> </ol>
<p><b>C2. Perception of HIV and pregnancy risk</b></p> <p>Allow approximately 15 minutes for this section.</p> <p><i>Stress the need for honesty. Make sure participants feel comfortable being honest.</i></p>	<p><b>Next, let's talk about teens' views about the risk of pregnancy and HIV and other STIs.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant if they have sex?</li> <li>2. How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting an STI if they have sex?</li> <li>3. How much are teens you know concerned about possibly getting HIV if they have sex?</li> <li>4. Do you think a lot of teens you know are doing things that put them at risk for getting pregnant/getting HIV or STIs? In what ways are they putting themselves at risk?</li> <li>5. In your opinion, what are some of the consequences of getting an STI or HIV?</li> </ol>

MODERATOR TIPS	QUESTIONS
	<p>6. What are some of the consequences of becoming or getting someone pregnant?</p>
<p><b>D. Wrap Up</b></p> <p>Allow approximately 10 minutes for this section; wrap up and closure is very important.</p> <p>Be sure to <b>hand out resource list, materials and incentives</b> before participants leave.</p>	<p><b><i>Our time is just about up. Would anyone like to add any other comments to the discussion before we end for the day?</i></b></p> <p><i>If time permits go around the room and have each person say one thing that he/she thinks is important regarding teens and their risk for pregnancy and HIV/STIs.</i></p> <p><b><i>Thank you so much for sharing your opinions and ideas. This will help us create a better program for teens.</i></b></p>

## **APPENDIX B**

### Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention

#### **Sample Demographic Survey**

NOTE: Each of the following questions can remain open-ended, with youth writing in their responses. OR you can provide response options and ask them to circle one (e.g., provide a range of ages, provide a range of grade levels, provide gender options such as male and female, provide race/ethnicity options and provide language options).

1. How old are you?
2. What is your grade level?
3. What is your sex?
4. What is your race?
5. What language(s) do you speak at home?

## APPENDIX C

### Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention

#### Sample Parent Consent Form

##### What's Going On?

[Insert agency or program name] is conducting a study to help us select and offer a teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention program for youth in your community.

##### What Would Happen?

Youth who participate in the study would take part in one small group discussion with 6-10 other youth. It would last about an hour. Participants would be asked to share their thoughts about teen pregnancy and HIV/STD (sexually-transmitted disease) prevention. The focus group is voluntary. The questions ask for opinions but do not ask about personal information or personal information about other youth. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not want to.

Each person who takes part would get a \$10 gift certificate for their time and effort. We would also serve snacks.

##### How Would Children Be Affected?

Participants would be given a chance to share answers to the interview questions in a small group. Answering questions about pregnancy and HIV/STDs might make the youth uncomfortable, but they would not have to answer any questions they do not want to.

##### How Would This Help Youth?

Youth who take part in this study may help improve teen pregnancy and HIV/STD prevention programming in their community.

##### Would Anybody Know My Child's Answers?

The youth in the group would hear your child's answers. We would ask everyone present not to talk about what people in the group said after the discussion is over, but there is a slight chance they will. Your child's name would not be on the responses. Your child's name would not be in any of our notes or reports.

##### Does My Child Have to Take Part?

Your child is free to join this evaluation study or not. He/she may stop at any time.

##### What if I Have Questions?

If you have questions about the study, here are some people you can call about the study:

- [Insert an agency/program contact]
- [Insert another agency/program contact]

**How Do I Give My Consent?**

If you permit your child to take part, please mark the YES box below and return the form to: \_\_\_\_\_.

If you do not permit your child to take part, please mark the NO box below and return the form to: \_\_\_\_\_.

Child's Name: _____	Age: _____
I have read this form about the study.	
<input type="checkbox"/> YES. My child has my consent to take part.	
<input type="checkbox"/> NO. My child <b>does not</b> have my consent to take part.	
Name of Parent/Guardian: _____	
Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____	
Date: _____	

## **APPENDIX D**

### Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention

#### **Sample Youth Assent Form**

##### **What is Going On?**

[Insert agency or program name] is conducting a study to help us select and offer a teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention program. You are being asked to take part in this study.

##### **What Would Happen?**

If you decide to be a part of this study, you would take part in one small group discussion with 6-10 other youth. It would last about an hour. You would be asked to share your thoughts about teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention. The focus group is voluntary. The questions ask for your opinions but do not ask you about personal information or personal information about other youth. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

If you decide not to take part, it would not affect whether you can take part in any other agency activities. Each person who takes part would get a \$10 gift certificate.

##### **How Would I Be Affected?**

You would be given a chance to share answers to questions in a small group. If a question makes you uncomfortable, you would not have to answer it. If you want to leave the focus group, you can. Stopping would not affect your participation in other agency activities or prevent you from receiving your gift certificate.

##### **How Would This Help?**

Youth who take part in this study may help to improve programs designed to prevent pregnancy and HIV/STI transmission in your community.

##### **Do My Parents Know About this?**

The permission form you brought today gave information about the study to your parents. By signing the form and checking "Yes" your parents gave permission for you to take part.

##### **Would Anybody Know My Answers?**

The youth in your group would hear your answers. We would ask everyone not to talk about what people in the group said after the interview is over. Your name would not be on the notes. Your responses would not be given to anyone at the agency. Your name would not be in any of our reports.

##### **What If I Have Questions?**

If you have questions about the study, you can ask your parents, or the people in charge of the study. Here are some people you can call about the study:

- [Insert an agency/program contact name and phone number]
- [Insert another agency/program contact name and phone number]

**How do I join the study?**

If you want to join, please check the first box below. Then print and sign your name with today's date. You will get a copy of this form. If you DO NOT want to join, please check the second box. Then print and sign your name with today's date.

This form has been read aloud to me. All my questions were answered. All parts of the study are clear to me. *Please check one box:*

- YES - I **give assent** to be part of the study. I have received a copy of this assent form.
- NO - I **DO NOT give assent** to be part of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Name - Please Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Signature of Assent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX E**

### Collecting Qualitative Data on Youth Perceptions Regarding Teen Pregnancy and HIV Prevention

#### **Focus Group Resources**

Focus Groups 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Richard A. Krueger & Mary Anne Casey, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000, [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

Focus Group Basics: From development to analysis, First 5 California, [www.cafc.ca.gov/ffn/FGcourse/FocusGroupCourse.html](http://www.cafc.ca.gov/ffn/FGcourse/FocusGroupCourse.html)

Focus Groups as Qualitative Research, David L. Morgan, 1997, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1990, [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, Michael Quinn Patton, Newbury Park: Sage, 1990, [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

Moderating to the Max: A Full-Tilt Guide to Creative Insightful Focus Groups and Depth Interviews, Jean Bystedt, Siri Lynn, Deborah Potts and Greg Fraley, Paramount Market Publishing, 2003.

The American Statistical Association, [www.amstat.org/sections/srms/brochures/focusgroups.pdf](http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/brochures/focusgroups.pdf)

[http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/section\\_1018.htm](http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/section_1018.htm)