FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Community Leaders/ Health Care Providers

Community Leaders/Health Care providers will be recruited through the Rockford Health Literacy Project Community Manager (to be hired).

Eligibility criteria: a) To be eligible to participate in the focus group, all community outreach coordinators need to be older than 18, and b) have experience working with or be knowledgeable of issues impacting Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations residing in zip codes 61101, 61102, and 61104; communities with the highest socially vulnerable index tracks in the city of Rockford. Healthcare providers need to be older than 18 and serve the Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations.

Informational flyers listing the eligibility criteria and announcing the focus group will be distributed by Rockford Project staff. The flyer will include the focus group date and time, along with a link to RSVP. The focus group will be conducted online via Zoom. About 8-10 participants are expected to attend.

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Outline

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Overview – purpose of the focus group and how we will use the information provided
3. Ground rules
4. Discussion – one question at a time
5. Closing – wrap up and brief synthesis of what was discussed. Thank participants for attending.

1. Welcome and introductions:

To start, we greet everyone and introduce ourselves (the UIC team present at the moment: Yolanda and Sarah). Everyone will be asked to briefly introduce themselves (name, role/connection to the Rockford Health Literacy project, years lived in Rockford, and a fun fact).

Participants will be asked if we could record the focus group. We want to record the focus group session because every point of view is important, and we do not want to miss any comments. No names or affiliations will be used in any reports. Data will be aggregated and summarized. If all agree, recording will begin.

2. Overview, purpose of the focus group:

"Welcome, everyone, and thank you for participating in this focus group. The purpose of the focus group is to gather your opinions about what are some of the issues that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx community residents experience in: a) communicating with their health providers, b) obtaining factual and reliable information about risk/benefits of the COVID-

19 vaccine, and c) getting vaccinated; and d) what can we do to remove such barriers? e) What are the best ways to communicate COVID-19 information to the community (e.g, radio, social media (which platform?), print flyers, face-to-face, etc.)? f) To what extent does the community you represent have access to health information using technology (e. g, social media)? g) Name the top five sources where the community obtains COVID-19 information
We want to understand the barriers/challenges that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx communities in Rockford encounter, and what can be done to eliminate them to better address COVID-19 health disparities. Your input is important to us, and we plan to use the information gathered today to improve health literacy and develop culturally relevant materials for our educational webinars.

Each question will be asked separately.

3. **Ground rules:**
   "Before we start the discussion, I would like to go over some ground rules:

- We hope to cover a number of questions that we have for today. We will not be gathering your name or associating it with a particular comment or question. We ask that you refrain from discussing what particular people said here or outside this group. Although we ask everyone in the group to respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality, and not to identify anyone in the group or repeat what is said during the group discussion, please remember that participants in the group may accidentally disclose what was said today".
- "Be mindful that we have only about 60 minutes for this discussion, so try to be succinct and brief.
- Your participation in this focus group is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. There is no obligation to stay until the end of the focus group.
- We prefer that you keep your video screen on, so that we can see each other. Yet, it is OK to turn off your video screen at any time, if you wish.
- Please mute yourself while not speaking.
- Please do not interrupt when others are speaking. Speak one at a time.
- Use the hand sign (under the reactions menu at the bottom of your screen), raise your hand, or use the chat if you would like to speak.
- There are no wrong answers today; please respect everyone's opinion, even if it is different from your own, and let everyone speak." Treat everyone's ideas with respect don't criticize.
- Keep focused on the topic or question

4. **Discussion:**
   Discuss one question at a time:
   a) What are some of the barriers and challenges that Black and Latinx communities experience in communicating with their healthcare providers?
   b) What are some of the barriers and challenges that Black and Latinx communities experience in obtaining factual and reliable information about the risk/benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine?
   c) What are some of the barriers and challenges that Black and Latinx communities experience getting vaccinated?
   d) What can we do to remove such barriers?

Facilitator –

- Listens, shows empathy and sympathy
- Refrains from sharing an opinion. Limits participation to nodding, asking for clarification, asking someone to repeat what they said, and asking follow-up questions. Common questions/comments: “Tell us more about that. Can you give an example? Please describe what you mean. Would you like to say something more about it? Thank you for sharing your point of view”
- Ensure that all participants who want to talk have the opportunity to do so.
- Keep track of the time.

5. **Closing:**

“Thank you for taking the time today to speak with us. The focus group is now over.” Facilitator shares a short synthesis (1-2 minutes) of what was discussed.
“I will produce a summary of the focus group for the Rockford project staff and will share it with you all. If you would like to receive a copy of the focus group summary, please type your email address in the chat.”