Tips for Facilitating Discovery Focus Groups

# ****Before the Focus Group:****

* Make sure you, the facilitator, are organized
  + Do you have all of your supplies (pen, paper, audio recording equipment)?
  + Does your recorder have fresh batteries?
  + Did you arrange food and beverages to be brought to the focus group?
  + Do you have copies of the letter of information, the consent form, the questions or other important information?
* Familiarize yourself with the questions you will be asking.
  + Do you understand what you want the group to discuss?
  + Are you prepared to rephrase or explain the questions, if needed?
  + Have you considered prompts or follow up questions?
* Make sure the snacks, questions, tables, chairs, etc. are set up prior to the focus group participants arriving.

# ****Setting up the Focus Group:****

* An effective focus group facilitator will make the group feel safe and comfortable. It is important to welcome everyone, make introductions, and invite everyone to enjoy a snack or beverage.
* Introduce the purpose of the session, how information is going to be used, where the information is going, and what their contribution will result in.
* Distribute the letter of information and, if necessary, ask participants to sign a consent form.
* Explain that the session will be audiotaped, and assure everyone that their privacy will be protected and that the recording, transcripts and any information that comes from the meeting will be kept securely.
* See the Focus Group Schedule and Script for a detailed description of setting up a focus group, including the “ground rules”.

# ****Communicating during the focus group:****

* Be clear and loud enough for everyone to hear.
* Make eye contact.
* Be interactive and engage the group as much as possible.
* Smile and be relaxed and comforting.
* Find a gentle way to ask that one person speaks at a time.
* Listen carefully to what you are hearing.
* Summarize what has been said to ensure you heard it correctly. You may need to interpret the words people are saying and re-state them (this is especially important if you think the recorder may not have picked up everything they said).
* When someone speaks about something off topic, it helps to try to get at the “essence” of what they are saying and then relate it back to the interview question. This helps ensure everyone has time to share and the discussion stays on topic.
* Provide adequate time for participants to answer questions. People require time to process questions and consider their answers. This is okay. Do not feel pressured to fill every silence.

# ****Things to Remember as Facilitator:****

* It is important to keep an eye on the time. Ensure you leave enough time to devote adequate discussion time to each question.
* If you are having difficulty generating a discussion, try rephrasing the question or prompting the group using a slightly different angle.
* • Remember you are there to facilitate a group discussion. It is not up to you to sway the group with your opinions or feelings, even though it is very likely you will have a particular stance. Do your best to stay neutral.