BTE Focus Group Protocol:
Overview, Responsibilities, and Deliverables

Overview

Johnson & Johnson and FHI 360 are committed to understanding the BTE program's effectiveness and impact on youth, the education system, its local operating companies, and the local community.

Each BTE site works with an assigned "BTE Site Evaluator," which is funded separately by Johnson & Johnson / FHI 360, to conduct an independent evaluation of the local program. The BTE Site Evaluator will follow local human subjects and/or ethics protocols or will adhere to FHI 360's Institutional Review Board requirements and procedures. Data and information obtained from the site-specific evaluation guide continuous program improvement, build broader community support and awareness, and promote sustainability.

This document will respond to the purpose of the focus groups and the specific requirements, protocols, and processes to be used.

- **Focus Group Data** *(BTE Participants Only),* including feedback on BTE Program Activities and information about participants' interests/goals; the BTE Site Evaluator obtains this data during facilitated session(s) with BTE participants.

Evaluator Roles & Responsibilities as they relate to Student Focus Groups

1. **WHAT IS TO BE DONE PRIOR TO CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS?**
   - Evaluators should confirm with the Site Coordinator:
     - Date(s), times, and duration (length of time) for sessions
     - Location (room) for sessions (ask for a space conducive to conducting the session where possible)
     - Number of students attending
2. **WHAT TO DO ON THE DAY OF THE FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS?**
   - Ensure all participating students have signed consent forms
   - Introduce yourself and give some background on why you are there

   A. WHO SHOULD CONDUCT FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS AT THE SCHOOLS?
     - Focus groups are the responsibility of the evaluator and the evaluator, ultimately, is responsible for what happens in these sessions. (If additional support is needed to take notes, record conversations, and/or facilitate the session, please ensure that these individuals are properly trained in appropriate focus group protocols and have been informed of the program and objectives. Without the latter, follow up questions will be difficult.)
     - Any facilitator, other than the contracted evaluator, must be approved through FHI 360 prior to conducting BTE focus groups.

B. WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE COLLECTED AT EACH SITE FOR EACH FOCUS GROUP SESSION?

- **THE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**
    - Focus group questions have been created and approved by FHI 360 for these sessions.
    - The Focus Group Administration Instructions page includes a statement on the purpose of the study and provides information regarding confidentiality and participation. Please read this (Item 2) to participants prior to asking the focus group questions.
    - Focus group questions
        - Required questions must be asked during the focus group sessions.
        - Optional questions can be asked as time permits.
        - Additional/optional questions requested by the site coordinator and/or school must be approved by FHI 360 and may be asked after all required questions have been addressed. Questions must be presented to FHI 360 prior to the focus group session and documentation should link the additional questions to the site program model.
- Information that should be documented to provide context for the session in the follow up conversation:
    - Location: room, hallway, cafeteria, playground, etc.
    - Climate: too cold, too hot, sunny, dark, cozy, warm,
    - Environment: too crowded, not enough chairs, not intimate setting, etc.
    - Seating: chairs no chairs; at desks, on the ground, around tables, etc.
    - Mood/dynamic of the group: loud, boisterous, rowdy, quiet, subdued, shy, angry, unhappy, cheerful, happy, complacent, etc.
    - Relationships/interactions: Describe the interactions between students as they entered the room and as they respond to each other. Do they seem to know each other? Are they quiet or talkative?
- Size of the focus group
    - Suggested 10-12
    - More than 12 in a group does not allow for all students to voice opinions in the time allotted.
    - If more than 12 students, schedule additional sessions to accommodate all.
- Length of the focus group session
    - Schedule sessions for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
    - It is not recommended to hold sessions for longer than 1 hour for this age group. Try to hold conversations within the time suggested.

C. WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR ASSURING THAT ALL VOICES IN THE FOCUS GROUPS ARE HEARD?

- Ask question and go around the room allowing each student to answer. As time permits you can return and let students provide more information.

- Ask student to write down answers (post it notes are one option) and then have a discussion around what the students write down.
- If you need other options, reach out to FHI 360 and other evaluators for additional options. Choose and utilize strategies that work best for your facilitation style and your group.

3. **WHAT TO DO FOLLOWING THE FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS? HOW SHOULD INFORMATION BE REPORTED BACK TO THE SITES?**
    - Results from the focus group sessions should provide useful, immediate feedback to the sites for improving the implementation as well as the types of program activities.
    - Schedule a debrief meeting with the Site Coordinator and FHI 360; the Site Coordinator may invite the BTE Management Team to the debriefing.
    - The debrief meeting should be scheduled at the same time as the focus group session and should occur within a day or two of the sessions, no longer than two weeks following the sessions. It is highly recommended that all results be summarized as quickly as possible and provided back to the sites within a day or two.
    - Options for presenting results: (see templates as examples)
        - Best practices suggest providing a visual and/or handout when presenting feedback to sites.
        - Consider the following outline:
            - Framing the conversation (providing background information), methods for analyzing the data, responses by question, interesting findings, followed by questions from the group
        - Other options will require prior approval from FHI 360

A. WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN THE FEEDBACK TO SITES?

- Provide an electronic copy of the presentation and/or visual handouts to FHI 360 and the team to use during the review and feedback session.
- An agenda or outline of the information that is going to be presented.
- Feedback should be presented in one of the options provided above or another method that has been approved by FHI 360 prior to distribution.

B. WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE SHARED WITH FHI 360?

- Confirmed dates of the Focus Group and debrief meeting/
- PowerPoint presentations and/or handouts must be forwarded to FHI 360 prior to the scheduled debrief with the site coordinator and team.
- To ensure consistency and context is provided in cross site reporting, please ensure that all modifications, revisions, or adaptations at the local level are discussed and approved by FHI 360 prior to execution.

Evaluation Materials

A variety of materials are available on the BTE Website (www.bridge2employment.org) to support the independent evaluation:

- **Background Information & Instructions**
  - BTE Overview
  - BTE Program Design & Protocols
  - BTE Evaluation Overview, Partner Roles & Responsibilities, and Evaluation Materials
  - BTE Site Evaluator Checklist
  - BTE Participant List Instructions
  - Academic Data Template Instructions
  - BTE Survey Administration Instructions
  - BTE Focus Group Administration Instructions
  - BTE Master Data Template Instructions

- **Forms & Templates.** Standard forms and Excel spreadsheets to facilitate the implementation and data collection processes. They include:
  - BTE Evaluation Agreement Template
  - Sample Parent Notification Letters
  - BTE Participant List Template
  - Academic Data Template
  - BTE Master Data Template

- **Common Survey Instruments.** FHI 360 developed a series of common evaluation instruments:

  BTE Participant Surveys
  - BTE Participant Entry Survey
  - BTE Participant Annual Survey
  - BTE Participant Exit Survey
  - BTE Survey Administration Instructions

  Comparison Group Surveys
  - BTE Comparison Group Baseline Survey
  - BTE Comparison Group Annual Survey
  - BTE Comparison Group Exit Survey
  - BTE Survey Administration Instructions

  Other Surveys
  - Johnson & Johnson Employee Survey

- **Focus Group Materials.** FHI 360 developed common focus group questions and a protocol for conducting and writing up the focus group sessions:
  - BTE Focus Group Protocol: Overview, Responsibilities, and Deliverables

- BTE Focus Group Administration Instructions
- BTE Focus Group Guide
- BTE Focus Group Questions

- **Reporting Materials.** Reporting and data analysis guidelines:
  - Annual Evaluation Report Guidelines