

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guide



### I. Introductions, Explanation, Ground Rules (5 minutes)

- a. Moderator introduces her/himself and explains project's purpose. *We are working with an organization in Washington, D.C., and some folks there are interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions about some issues that teenagers face, deal with, or are concerned about.* More of the topic will unfold.
- b. Explain focus group process. *A research method for collecting data similar to surveys, except that rather than asking and answering questions on a one-on-one basis, questions are posed to the whole group and all are asked to respond and talk to each other.* Ask respondents to explain why they are here and what is expected; define "opinion:" it's what you think or feel.
- c. Explain ground rules:
  - i. Explain if the session will be recorded in any way and, if necessary, obtain consent. If a two-way mirror is in use or others not in the room are watching/listening, explain this to participants.
  - ii. Assure confidentiality and stress the importance of honest opinions.
  - iii. Control the pace of discussion. Gradually move from topics, and allow all an opportunity to speak.
  - iv. Reiterate that this is not school and we are not teachers. There are no rules about appropriate language and participants do not need to raise hands, but need to speak loudly, clearly, and one at a time.
  - v. Reassure participants that there are no right or wrong answers; all opinions and thoughts are welcome.
- d. Respondent introductions. Names, grades/ages, school attending, what they enjoy doing for fun, and icebreaker as appropriate.

### II. Saliency of Teen Pregnancy as a Problem (Group Formation) (10 minutes)

- a. What types of things are important to you in your life right now—things that you think a lot about or are concerned about?
  - i. LISTEN FOR: school/education, drugs, family problems, poverty, violence, finances.
  - ii. PROBE: Try and think of what the number-one issue that you most worry about is.
  - iii. PROBE FOR: sexual pressures and associated problems, i.e., pregnancy, STDs, AIDS.
- b. [IF IT EMERGES IN DISCUSSION:] Some people mentioned thinking about or worrying about sex or things related to sex, like pregnancy or AIDS. What worries you about sex? How much does it worry you—a lot, somewhat, or just a little? Why?
  - i. PROBE FOR: getting pregnant, doing it because someone wants you to, not doing it and feeling left out, getting STDs/AIDS, getting a reputation.

### III. Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors about Preventing Teen Pregnancy (15 minutes)

- a. So... [IF MENTIONED] some of you consider teen pregnancy something that is pretty important—something that concerns you or that you worry about. I am curious... How much of a "problem" is teen pregnancy in your school? ...in your family? ...in your life?
  - i. PROBE: Does anyone have friends who have babies?
  - ii. PROBE: Do you know anyone around your age who has a baby?

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- b. Why do you think some teens get pregnant? What are the reasons they might give? Do you think there are some teenagers who *want* to get pregnant? Why is that do you think? What are the reasons to *not* get pregnant as a teenager?
  - c. How concerned are you about *teen pregnancy* compared with some of the other issues people mentioned? How much does it worry you—a lot, somewhat, or just a little? Why? How do you think pregnancy is related to or similar to these other issues? How is it different from the other issues?
  - d. Where do you go, or whom do you talk to, about some of these things you have mentioned—some of the things that are related to sex and pregnancy?
    - i. LISTEN FOR: friends, parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, etc.
    - ii. PROBE: How do teens talk about teen pregnancy? What kinds of words do you use? What kinds of things do you say?
    - iii. PROBE: Whom do you listen to about this issue? Who influences your attitudes or your opinions? ...Peers? ...Parents? ...Teachers? ...Other adults? ...Music and media?
  - e. Has anyone heard or read about a recent study that found teen pregnancy is down in the United States—that it has fallen to the lowest levels in 20 years? If so, what do you remember thinking about that? Do you think it's true? Why or why not?
  - f. Would you agree or disagree that teen pregnancy is something that can be *prevented*? If so, how? Why do you believe that? What do you think can be done about it? How would you go about trying to stop it? What do you think it will take to solve the problem of teen pregnancy?

#### IV. Barriers to and Motivations for Preventing Teen Pregnancy (20 minutes)

- a. What are the most common ways teenagers can prevent teen pregnancy? Which are most effective?
  - i. LISTEN FOR: contraceptive methods and abstinence.
  - ii. PROBE: What words do you use to describe contraceptive methods and abstinence?
- b. [FOR CONTRACEPTIVES:] Some of you mentioned various kinds of pregnancy prevention methods that people use. What are some of the most popular contraceptives, do you think? Why do you think some teenagers use contraceptives? Why do you think some teenagers do not use contraceptives?
- c. [FOR ABSTINENCE:] Some of you mentioned not having sex as a way to prevent pregnancy. Why do you think some teens choose to not have sex? Why do some teens choose to have sex? Do you think this is an easy choice to make? Why or why not?

#### FOR SEXUALLY-EXPERIENCED GROUPS:

- d. Do you know if many of your friends are having sex? How do you know that they are having sex? How do you feel about that?
- e. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. Without necessarily telling your personal story here today, could you tell me why teens like you have sex? For example, what reasons would your friends give?
- f. Do you think a typical teenager who has sex *always* uses birth control like [NAME A VARIETY OF BIRTH CONTROL METHODS]? What do you think can get in the way for someone who *wants* to use birth control, but doesn't always? Have you ever used any of these methods of birth control? If so, why did you use it? If not, why didn't you use it?

FOR SEXUALLY-INEXPERIENCED GROUPS:

- g. Do you think most of our friends are currently having sex or not having sex? Why do you think that? How do you feel about that? What age do you feel most teenagers first have sex?
- h. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. Without necessarily telling your personal story here today, could you tell me some reasons why teens have chosen to not have sex?
- i. Which do you think is an easier decision to make—to have sex or to postpone sex? Why? What kinds of things do you think can make it difficult for someone who has made a decision—either way—to stick with it?

FOR MIXED SEXUALLY-EXPERIENCED GROUPS:

- j. Do you think most of our friends are currently having sex or not having sex? Why do you think that? How do you feel about that? What age do you feel most teens first have sex?
- k. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. If you feel comfortable talking about it, can you talk a little bit about that? Try and explain what some of the reasons are why you have chosen to either have sex or not have sex. What do you think about why some teens choose to have sex? And, why do others choose not to have sex?
- l. Which do you think is an easier decision to make—to have sex or to postpone sex? Why? What kinds of things do you think can make it difficult for someone who has made a decision—either way—to stick with it?

**V. Ten Things about Teen Pregnancy (15 minutes)**

[ASK ONLY IF NOT ELICITED WELL ENOUGH THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW]

- a. Imagine that you are talking to a group of other teenagers who are around your age. What is the one most important thing you would want to say to them about teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention?
  - i. ACTION: Go around the room and ask each participant to respond.
- b. OK. Now imagine that you are talking to a group of adults—parents, teachers, and other adults you interact with. What is the one most important thing you would want to say to them about teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention?
  - i. ACTION: Go around the room and ask each participant to respond.

**VI. Acknowledgements and Conclusions**

- a. Conclude session, thank participants, provide them with additional information if relevant, and assist them in leaving.