Tips for Facilitating Discovery Interviews

# ****Preparing for the interview:****

* Familiarize yourself with the interview questions in advance. Are you prepared to rephrase or explain the questions if needed?
* Organize materials (e.g., handouts, questions, etc.) in advance.
* Choose an appropriate location that is private, quiet and free of noise and stressors. Agree upon a place and time where the interviewee will be physically and emotionally comfortable.
* Ensure that participants are comfortable communicating in English. Make alternative arrangements if participants need additional language support. Consider employing a translator, conducting the interview in the language of choice or, providing a written copy of the interview questions in the preferred language to assist in comprehension.

# ****Beginning the interview:****

* Provide a second copy of the interview guide and information letter to participants and ensure they understand them. You may have to rephrase questions if necessary and use examples to help explain the questions in other ways.
* Introduce yourself and thank the interviewee for sharing their time and their story with you. Briefly explain the purpose of the interview (see: Focus Group Schedule and Script).
* Explain that the interviewee’s responses will be confidential. This means their name will not be associated with what they said. No one will be able to trace their responses back to them. If any of their quotes are used in reports or presentations, pseudonyms will be used.
* Review the information letter with the interviewee (e.g., make sure to review confidentiality, consent, etc.).
* Ask if they have any questions before you begin.
* Ask whether it is okay for you to take notes during the interview and explain why you will be writing before you start.
* Make the interview feel safe and comfortable (i.e., build positive rapport, use conversational tone).
* Plan for no interruptions (i.e., turn off phone, find a quiet space, etc.). Don’t rush through the questions. This can be overwhelming for the person being interviewed. Be conscious of the interviewees’ energy levels. The interview may need to be completed over multiple visits.
* Be open-minded and focused.

# ****Communicating during the interview:****

* Make eye contact.
* Use your body language (e.g., smile, nod).
* Avoid interrupting the interviewee. If your question is mis-understood, or the interviewee strays off topic, gently guide the interviewee back to the topic at hand after they have had the opportunity to speak.
* Avoid using difficult words or jargon.
* Be aware of biases and avoid judgmental comments.
* Avoid using your own language. Instead, try paraphrasing the interview ideas, using their own words.
* If you find a response confusing, ask for clarification in the moment. If necessary, summarize what you have just heard back to the interviewee and ask for clarification.
* Avoid limiting questions: try not to phrase a question in a way that forces a participant to choose between two options. Instead, ask interviewee to speak to their experience.

# ****Listening during the interview:****

* Have a note pad on hand so you can:
  + Write down ideas or thoughts someone said that you would like to go back to. This helps you focus on what is being said, while not forgetting what it is you want to follow up on.
  + Jot down key words the person says so you can use this to cue him/her if you would like to ask more questions later. Using the person’s own words is more familiar and can often be reassuring and helpful for fueling more dialogue.
  + Do not attempt to capture everything that a person says on a note pad. This can be distracting to the interviewee.
* Try to get at the root of an issue, emotion, experience, etc. For example, if the person says they have a good relationship with the staff, try to uncover as much as you can about that relationship (e.g., What makes it good? What does that look like to you? What does that mean to you? Etc.). Similarly, if someone indicates that ‘snack time’ is their favorite time of day, probe for more information. “Why is snack time your favourite? Where do you have snack time? Who is around and what else is happening? How do you feel during snack time?”
* Be a good, empathetic listener.
* Clarify meaning and summarize what they are saying to ensure you heard it correctly. You can also ask them to provide examples.
* Allow the person to express themselves and provide feedback to ensure you understand what they mean.