Appendix 3-A

Our Communities Then and Now
Community Change and the Impacts of Community Progress Teams
Marion County, Oregon 1999

Appendix 3-A: Our Communities Then and Now
Community Change and the Impacts of Community Progress Teams
Marion County, Oregon 1999[1]

Summarized by Rebecca Hernandez, OSU Family Policy Program

Developing CPTs. In 1994 the Marion County Children and Families Commission (MCCFC) gave priority to enhancing local level community support for children, youth and families. Specifically, the MCCFC sought "To foster a coordinated system of supports and services at the local level which:

- Builds upon the strengths and values of the families;
- Recognizes that families and communities know what is needed in their area; and
- Prioritizes and integrates services developed by and for communities."

The key strategy selected to achieve this goal was the creation of Community Progress Teams (CPTs) in communities throughout Marion County. CPTs strategy was selected because communities and neighborhoods vary greatly in needs, resources, concerns, diversity, and values. CPTs allowed local communities to directly influence the supports available to families in their communities. CPTs are comprised of community and neighborhood volunteers who support and advocate for children and families; every CPT was required to have a representative from local schools, public safety, and human services agencies as well as community members. The mission of each local CPT was to identify and address local issues and needs, reflecting the desires and resources of the community.

Development and initial planning of each local CPT was facilitated by the Marion Extension Service Family and Community Development Agent with technical assistance provided by the MCCFC. Once a local CPT had a plan for operation, the MCCFC awarded the community $10,000 as seed money for local activities and programs.

By 1998, thirteen CPTs had been established throughout Marion County. Each CPT had been in operation at least one year, and all had instituted some local level activities to address local priorities and needs. For example, local CPTs had established a number of programs and events including after-school activities programs; Back to school fairs, DiadeLos Ninos' Celebration, Community Connector Programs, and Mentoring Programs.

Assessing CPT Progress. In 1998, the MCCFC initiated an assessment of the CPTs, specifically seeking to determine the progress each had made in addressing issues and providing supports in their respective communities. An evaluation team was brought together to design the assessment process. This team included local CPT representatives, MCCFC staff, OSU Extension staff, an evaluation specialist from OSU, and other professionals experienced in community development.

[1] For more information and the full report, please contact:
Marion County Children and Families Commission
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The team sought to create an evaluation process that was responsive to the realities of the CPTs, including:

- the fluid and informal nature of citizen volunteer groups
- the diversity of communities and the diversity of the activities they had undertaken
- the various stages of development across the 13 CPTs.

In addition, the CPTs and the evaluation team wanted the assessment to be useful, to identify the successes and challenges CPTs had experienced, and to provide information for future planning.

In the final assessment design, each CPT group was lead through a focused process of discovery and consensus, culminating in the development of an individual case study for each CPT. These case studies provided unique information to each community and each CPT. In addition, because similar questions were addressed by each CPT, it was possible to define common issues, successes, and challenges.

The evaluation was focused on the three key goals common to all CPTs. These key goals were to:

1. Promote community conditions that protect and support the health and safety of all children, youth and families;
2. Encourage partnerships among individuals, organizations, schools, businesses, and agencies;
3. Bring community members together to make plans and decisions for addressing the needs of local children, youth, and families.

A retrospective pre/post survey entitled ***My Community Then and Now*** (see page 4) was designed to gather information relative to these three goals (above). On this survey, each goal was briefly described and respondents used a 9-point scale to rate their community relative to that goal before and after the CPT was initiated. Respondents were also asked to give specific examples that supported their ratings. Finally, respondents indicated how much the CPT had helped the community make progress toward each goal.

Using this survey, data were collected from CPT members in focus groups and from other key informants in individual interviews.

CPT Focus Groups. A structured focus group process was conducted with the full CPT membership in each community. The process began with individuals completing the ***My Community Then and Now*** survey, rating the community relative to the first of the three CPT goals BEFORE the CPT began and AFTER its implementation. Then, in an adaptation of nominal group technique, one by one the members of the group shared their ratings and perceptions.

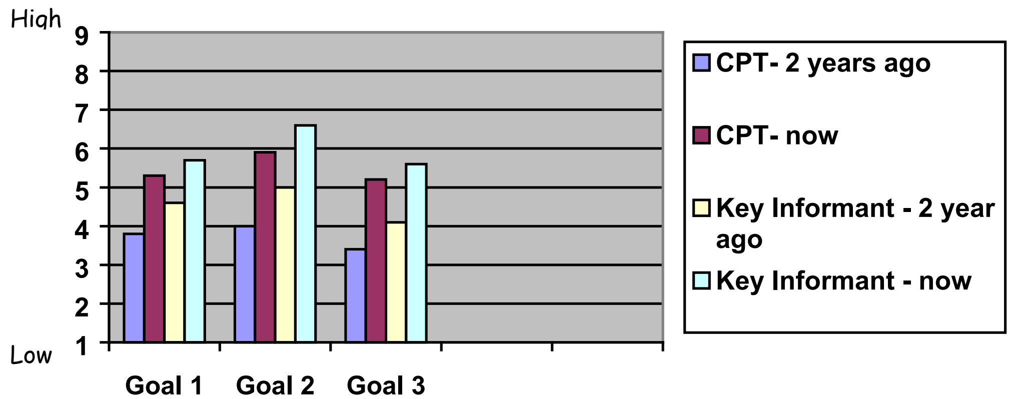
This sharing was followed by group discussion of the "before and after CPT" ratings and the examples given in support of these ratings. Following this discussion, individuals were free to change their original numerical ratings if the discussion had led them to a different decision. Few ratings were changed. This process of individual ratings followed by focused group discussion was repeated for the next two goals.

Key Informant Interviews. In all 13 CPT communities, interviews were conducted with 5 to 8 representatives of key community systems who were not CPT members. Across the communities, these key informants included school principals, police officers, local civic leaders, and agency professionals who were knowledgeable of community conditions and supports for children, youth, and families. The key informants were interviewed by phone using the ***My Community Then and Now*** survey. Each informant rated the community relative to the three goals BEFORE and AFTER the CPT initiative, and identified the role, if any, the CPT had in community change.

Quantitative data analysis compared mean ratings on each goal area across time (before and after the CPTs) and across CPT members and key informants. Qualitative data analysis examined the examples provided by the CPT focus groups and key informants. This analysis sought to define patterns of change, challenges, and successes across communities.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS ACROSS NINE CPTs

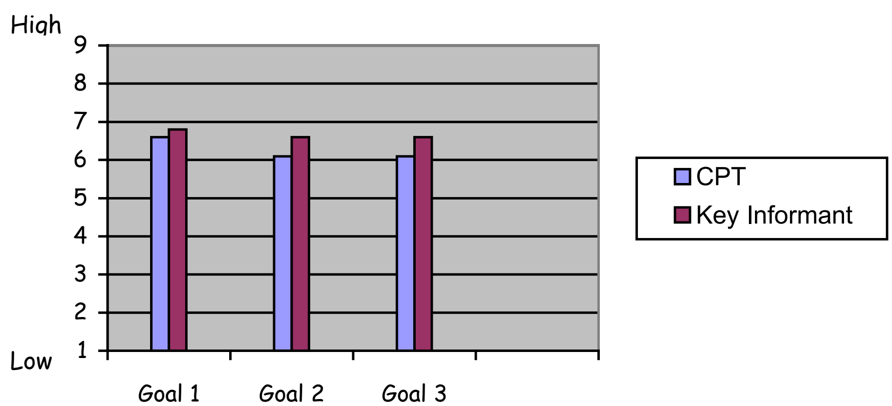
1. Both CPTs members and key informants perceived that community conditions had improved for children, youth and families



Key examples:

- *Activities for youth have increased, both after school and in the summer*
- *More people know where to turn for help, because of better information on services*
- *There has been more interaction among community groups and organizations- schools, churches, city, businesses- to get activities going for youth.*
- *Schools, churches and other groups share facilities for community programs.*

2. Both CPT members and key informants reported that CPTs had contributed to the improved conditions for children, youth, and families.



Sample comments from key informants:

- *Cascade CPT has been instrumental in getting people to work together.*
- *Jefferson Together is a clearinghouse for information and offers classes for parents.*
- *SCYFA (the local CPT) has been THE group that has made a difference in Mill City; their family center is a place where people can go for help.*

Goal 1 - The community supports the health and safety of all children, youth and families.	**How true 2 years ago?** **1 = NO! Never** **9 = Always! Great!**	**How true Now?** **1 = NO! Never** **9 = Always! Great!**
1a. All families can get any help they need when they need it, to be able to prevent problems as well as deal with problems when they happen. Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**
1b. People are "good neighbors." Residents care about and support children, youth and families by being neighborly, volunteering, etc. Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**
How much has the CPT done to help the community make progress toward this goal? Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**
Goal 2 - Community residents, schools, agencies, churches, businesses, and other organizations work together to support children, youth and families.	**How true 2 years ago?** **1 = NO! Never** **9 = Always! Great!**	**How true Now?** **1 = NO! Never** **9 = Always! Great!**
2a. People, schools organizations and agencies have good relationships with one another. Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**
2b. By working together, people schools, organizations and agencies, use their resources more effectively. Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**
How much has the CPT done to help the community make progress toward this goal? Key examples:	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**	**1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9**

Goal 3 - Community members work together to make plans and decisions about children, youth, family and community issues.	How true 2 years ago? 1 = NO! Never 9 = Always! Great!	How true Now? 1 = NO! Never 9 = Always! Great!
3a. People know what programs and services currently exist to help children, youth and families. Key examples:	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9
3b. A wide variety of people and groups participate in community planning and decision making to address children, youth and family issues. Key examples:	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9
How much has the CPT done to help the community make progress toward this goal? Key examples:	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9

Appendix 3-B

Participant Surveys

Appendix 3-B: Participant Surveys

Clara Pratt, Oregon State University Family Policy Program

Participants have valuable opinions that can be used to improve community activities and programs. To learn about these opinions you have to *ask everyone and regularly.* Make satisfaction surveys a regular part of your performance measurement system. Effective participant surveys:

1. ***Focus responses on important issues***
2. ***Be fair with participants***
3. ***Make it easy for participants to respond***
4. ***Assess how participants were treated***
5. ***Assess what participants gained, if anything, from participation***
6. ***Elicit suggestions for improving procedures and outcomes***
7. ***Identify important characteristics of the respondent, but assure confidentiality***
8. ***Think about how you will use your results***

1. Focus on important issues

You only have a few questions, so be sure that each one addresses information that you need to know and will use. Ask about reactions, feelings, behaviors that are related to what the activity or program was trying to accomplish. Ask only for demographic information that is needed to operate or improve an activity or program.

2. Be fair with participants

Before people are asked to respond to a survey, tell them:

- ✓ They do NOT have to complete the survey but that their responses are important.
- ✓ How the information will be used. Generally the use is to improve future programs or activities.
- ✓ Their identities are protected or, if their identities might be known, that responses will be confidential.

People can then fairly choose to participate…or not.

Be open to positive and negative responses.

- ✓ Questions should offer participants an equal chance of reporting positive or negative views.
- ✓ Note in the following sections, the sample questions do NOT assume positive opinions or positive change.

> ***Please answer the following questions about the program. Your answers will be confidential. They will be combined with answers from other people and used to improve the program.***
>
> ***You don't have to answer any question, but please remember: Your ideas are important to us!***
>
> *Thank you!*

3. Make it easy for participants to respond

On surveys, use mostly fixed choice questions on which participants circle or check their answers. You may want to use some *limited* open-ended questions following some fixed choice questions to gain more information.

Questions that require participants to write out answers rarely gain much information. This is especially true when the participants are youth, have lower educational levels, or are not motivated by "academic" types of activities.

Long written answers are also much more difficult to analyze. If you need lots of detailed answers, consider using interviews or focus groups to gather information.

A Fixed Choice Question
Overall, how do you rate the community activities available for children ages 9 to 12?

1	Poor	4	Very good
2	Fair	5	Excellent
3	Good	6	Don't know

An Open-ended Follow-Up Question
What is ONE specific activity that should be added or expanded to better meet your children's interests?

4. Assess how participants were treated – Quality of service

"Respect," "concern," and "availability" are words that may, or may not, describe how participants are treated. No one wants to be treated "like a number."

Ask participants how well a program or activity met their needs for respect/concern, influence on decision-making, and convenience. You can use specific questions to directly ask about these characteristics:

The program treats me as an individual with unique needs and concerns:
☐ **All of the time** ☐ **Most times** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Rarely or never**

The program respects my choices, and preferences:
☐ **All of the time** ☐ **Most times** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Rarely or never**

The program staff are available to help me when I need support or have questions:
☐ **All of the time** ☐ **Most times** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Rarely or never**

Alternatively, questions can indirectly assess overall satisfaction with treatment by asking:

Would you recommend this service to your friends if you think they might be interested?
☐ **Definitely yes** ☐ **Probably** ☐ **Maybe** ☐ **Probably not** ☐ **Definitely not**

If you had it to do over, would you become involved with this program again?
☐ **Definitely yes** ☐ **Probably** ☐ **Maybe** ☐ **Probably not** ☐ **Definitely not**

These questions are important gauges of how people feel about how their treatment as participants in an activity or program.

5. Assesses what participants gained

Directly ask participants if, as a result of the program or activities, they gained something positive. You can gain the most valuable information by asking participants to consider the *specific purpose of the program* as they answer questions about what they gained, if anything.

For example, either of the following two questions can be adapted to almost any situation.

The mentoring activities offered by our volunteers are intended to help young people feel more supported in school. Overall, how would you rate what your child gained from this program?
▢ **Excellent** ▢ **Very Good** ▢ **Good** ▢ **Fair** ▢ **Poor**

This program seeks to help new families connect with supports in their neighborhood and community. How much did the information that you received help you to find the supports your wanted?

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Not helpful	*A little helpful*	*Mixed – Some helpful some not*	*Somewhat helpful*	*Very helpful*

Participant outcomes can be assessed directly with questions that ask about changes that may have occurred as a result of an activity or program. Again, specifying the original purpose of the activity or program strengthens the assessment of outcomes.

The mentoring activities offered by our volunteers are intended to help young people feel more supported in school. Has your child's involvement in this program lead to positive changes in his or her skills or behaviors?

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
YES, BIG positive changes	Yes, some positive changes	Yes and No, some things are better and others are not	No, no positive changes	NO, things are worse now

A follow-up open-ended question could be added to any of the above fixed choice questions. Such a question should focus on outcomes or changes that participants experienced. By limiting the question and being specific, you will make it relatively easy for people to respond. For example, the question (above) on the impact of mentoring on a child could be followed with:

> **What is ONE example of how things improved *or* got worse for your child as a result of the mentoring program?**

"No change" or "negative change" answers can guide program improvements. Positive examples provide valuable information for future recruitment and public relations.

Retrospective pre-post tests can be included in satisfaction surveys to gain further information on outcomes. Ask people to assess their skills or behaviors NOW at the end of some service. Then ask them to *think back* to before the service (retrospective) and to assess their skills then. By comparing the two assessments you have a measure of change.

The family volunteer program seeks to 1) increase the shared, positive activities between parents and school-aged children and 2) increase children's understanding of their community and how they can contribute.

How would you rate your family on the following NOW and BEFORE your family volunteer experience?	NOW Low					High	BEFORE Low					High
The number of shared, positive activities that linked you and your school-aged children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your child/ren's understanding of the needs in our community	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your child/ren's understanding of what they can do to help our community	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. Elicit suggestions for improving procedures and outcomes

One or two open-ended questions can be used to gain ideas about how programs can be improved.

How could we better meet your needs in this program?
What is *one* thing you wish we would change about this program?
What is *one* thing that you hope we *never change* about this program?
What other comments do you want to share about this program or your experiences?

7. Identify important characteristics of the respondent

Use the last questions of a survey to assess the characteristics of respondents including their history with the program. Carefully consider the characteristics that are likely to influence satisfaction or outcomes. Ask about these.

8. Use your results

Once you have gathered survey information, analyze and use it! Develop and share *tabulated or summarized results* with participants, staff, and advisory committees. Sharing results opens the way for honest discussion and decision-making. Carefully consider what every finding, suggestion, or comment can mean to the program or activity.

Then use what you have learned to improve!

Appendix 3-C

Demographic Information Surveys

Appendix 3-C: Demographic Information Surveys

Collecting basic demographic information is very helpful to performance measurement. This information can be used to

- Describe participants
- Compare rates of participation (outputs) across groups (ages, gender, ethnicity, geographic areas, income, other)
- Compare satisfaction across groups
- Compare outcomes across different groups.

The more questions that are asked, the more people are likely to object, refuse to answer, or feel their privacy has been invaded. **Remember, there should always be a good, programmatic reason for asking personal and especially detailed information**.

Below are **examples** of questions that can be used to collect basic information about families with children.

- The zip code question (1) provides information about geographic area; a similar question might ask the name or areas of a community or county.
- The question about services used (5) provides information about community involvement; other categories could easily be added.

We want our programs and activities to be great for all who come! By answering the following questions, you can help us know who we are reaching.

1. Your zip code:_______ **2. Your Gender**: ☐M ☐F

3. Your age:

☐ under 18 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56+

4. Please CIRCLE the ages of the children in your household (note any twins!):

Under 1 year 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18+

5. Please CHECK ALL the community resources that you use:

☐ WIC ☐ Child care ☐ Oregon Health Plan ☐ Public schools

☐ Free/reduced lunches ☐ Public Libraries ☐ Recreation ☐ OTHER: ____

Income Level. People generally do not like to provide income information. Further, even if people are willing, they are often not clear if what is wanted is net or gross income, or for what time period – last month? So far this year? Last year?
If income information is essential, then ask about categories of income, specifying income after taxes and during a particular time period – usually in the past year. Be sure that the categories are realistic for the groups responding.

6. Please check your annual income last year, after taxes:

☐ under $20,000	☐ over $20,000 but under $30,000	☐ over $30,000 but under 40,000	☐ over $40,000

Another way to assess income is through a proxy or indirect measure of income. For example, question #5 on the previous page is a **proxy measure of income level.** Because lower income families are eligible for WIC, Oregon Health Plan, and Free and Reduced Lunches, this item provides very basic information about income level.

Ethnicity. Sometimes it is important to know the ethnic/racial background of participants. Defining ethnicity is not easy in a multi-cultural society, and it is important to describe categories so that everyone "fits."

The categories shown in the question below are commonly used; these groups will describe most people and the "other" category allows for unique responses.

7. Please check which of the following ethnic groups *best* describes you?

☐ Black or African-American	☐ Asian American/Pacific Islander
☐ Hispanic or Latino	☐ Native American
☐ White or European American	☐ Other - please specify: ____________

In some situations more precise information about ethnicity may be desirable. For example, by assessing the ethnic background of mothers and fathers, it is possible to identify biracial or multiethnic families.

Please mark (X) which of the following ethnic groups *best* describes:	**You?**	**Your mother?**	**Your father?**
1. Black or African American			
2. Asian American/Pacific Islander			
3. Hispanic or Latino			
4. Native American			
5. White or European American			
6. Other (Please specify): _______________________			

If knowing specific heritage is important, then ethnic groups can be refined to specify subgroups, for example, Asian American could be further categorized as of Chinese descent, Japanese descent, Vietnamese descent, and so on. But remember, this many of us have a multi-ethnic heritage.

Other information: When demographic information is collected, it is easy to gather simple information about how participants heard about a class or other opportunity. For example, the following question could be added to demographic questions.

8. How did you hear about this parenting class?

 newspaper school mailing friend radio

 OTHER: ______________________

Appendix 3-D

Focus Group Interview

Appendix 3-D: Focus Group Interview

WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP?

The basic idea of a Focus Group Interview (FGI) is simple. A group discusses certain topics, commonly for one to two hours. The interviewer/leader/moderator raises various issues, focusing the discussion on matters of interest to the research according to an outline or general guide (Focus Group Interviews – A Reader). Analysis of gathered information attempts to discern patterns and trends that develop among participants, also across focus groups.

WHEN SHOULD ONE USE A FOCUS GROUP?

Examples of questions that could be answered with Focus Group Interviews are[i]:

- "What do existing clients or potential clients think about the new proposal or program?"
- "What are the strengths/weaknesses of the proposed program?"
- "Will the new plan or program work?"
- "How should we promote the new program?"
- "How well is the current program working?"

Focus Group interviewing uncovers information on human perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts. It is not effective for discovering technical solutions, but so often it is forgotten that what seems a technical problem is really both a technical and a human problem.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS	
ADVANTAGES[ii]	**DISADVANTAGES**
Fast and relatively cheap.	FGIs are very easily misused.
Great for generating hypotheses when little is known.	FGIs are easy to set up, but require skill to moderate well.
Flexibility. Great ability to handle contingencies.	FGIs demand systematic and tedious procedures to analyze the data.
Group interview respondents stimulate dialogue among the group.	FGIs are not intended to obtain numbers that represent a population; rather FGIs give in-depth information about what some people think.
Drastically reduces distance between the respondent who produces information and the stake-holder who uses it. Findings emerge in a form that most users fully understand.	Groups can vary considerably. Therefore, several FGIs might be needed to balance the idiosyncrasies of individual sessions.

STEPS IN CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Consider your purpose: Begin by writing. Determine whom to study.

2. Know the information users, what information they want and why they want it.

3. Develop a plan and estimate resources needed: Make both a chronological and fiscal plan.

4. Identify the questions to be asked in the interview: Identify potential questions; Highlight the key questions; Establish the context of the questions; Arrange the questions in a logical sequence; Begin with unstructured questions; Carefully use structured and semi-structured questions.

5. The art of moderating the group interview:

    a. Moderators must be mentally alert and free from distractions.

    b. Small talk just before the FGI helps create a warm and friendly environment, puts the participants at ease, and purposefully avoids the key issues to be discussed later.

    c. Individuals who talk a great deal and might dominate should be seated to the moderator's side. Shy and quiet participants are best placed immediately across from the moderator.

    d. The location should be easy to find, relatively free from outside distractions, neutral, and have tables and chairs arranged with participants facing each other.

    e. The moderator should direct and keep the discussion flowing, and take few notes. The notes of the moderator are not so much to capture the total interview, but to identify future questions that need to be asked.

    Two essential techniques for the moderator are: (1) The Five Second Pause, and (2) The Probe. The short *pause* often prompts additional points of view or agreement with a previously mentioned position especially when coupled with eye contact from the moderator.

    The probe is a request or additional information. Examples of probes are: "Would you explain further?"; "Would you give me an example of what you mean?"; "Would you say more?"; "Is there anything else?"; " Please describe what you mean."

    f. FGIs should be recorded in two ways: by an audio tape recorder and with written notes taken by an assistant moderator.

g. The moderator must create a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere, provide the ground rules, develop a climate for sharing among the participants, and set the tone for the interview.

h. The first question is designed to engage all participants one at a time in the group discussion.

6. Identify the audience, those who will be interviewed:

Consider the purpose identified in step 1. Existing groups may have ways of relating to each other that can influence the results. New audiences can be identified from existing lists, contacting existing groups, and random telephone screening. Use systematic notification procedures to ensure people will attend FGI session. Incentives may help ensure good attendance and also promote good will between sponsor and participants.

Six to nine participants are needed for most Focus Group Interviews. More participants inhibit opportunity for discussion, and fewer may not provide the desired interaction. Successful Focus Group Interviews have been conducted with as few as two participants.

7. Conducting the Focus Group Interview:

a) The helpful rule of thumb is to continue conducting interviews until little new information is provided.

b. When the session is ended, check the tape to be sure it adequately captured the group comments. The moderator and assistant moderator should then find a secluded spot to de-brief the session.

8. Analyzing the results consists of four distinct levels:

a. Findings – What was said by the participants?

b. Interpretations – What do the findings mean to the analyst?

c. Judgments – Are the findings of value to the stakeholder?

d. Recommendations – What should the stakeholder do?

This distinction between the four levels provides an outline for the analysis. Also, this distinction allows the information users to disagree with the recommendations or judgments without disagreeing with the findings. Notes should be made by the assistant moderator of the non-verbal responses during the actual interview session. These cues should be considered when analyzing the results.

9. Reporting the results:

    a. Consider your audience.
    b. Focus on the most important results.
    c. Attempt to present both written and oral reports.

TIPS FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Equipment/Tapes:

1. Record the interviews!

2. Use 90-minute tapes. Sixty-minute tapes are too short and 120-minute tapes are prone to break and jam. Before the session, use fast forward and rewind on new tapes to ensure that they do not stick or jam.

Systematic Notification Procedure:

1. Approximately 10 to 14 days before the meeting, begin making telephone invitations to the session. It is best to over-recruit and later cancel some invitations if it appears too many will attend.

2. One week before the meeting, send a personalized follow-up letter of invitation to those who have consented to participate.

3. The day before the meeting, make another phone call to each person as a reminder of the session and to ask about intentions to attend.

Optimum Moderator Characteristics:

1. Well-rested and alert for the FGI session.

2. Prepared to give standard introduction without referring to notes.

3. Can remember questions/questioning route without referring to notes.

4. Responsible for advance arrangement of meeting room; extra tapes, batteries, an extension cord.

5. Avoids head nodding or other responsive body language.

6. Avoids comments that signal approval.

7. Avoids stating own opinions.

Duties of Assistant Moderator:

1. Maintains tape recorder.

2. Takes detailed notes.

3. Handles unexpected interruptions.

4. Asks questions where important and relevant.

5. Leads the analysis process.

More About Questions:

1. All questions have a "Stimulus" and a "Response." The stimulus is the topic of discussion, and the response provides clues to how people are expected to answer.

2. An unstructured question is free of both stimulus and response. Semi-structured questions narrow the inquiry by limiting either the stimulus or the response.

3. The "Focus" of an FGI is achieved by careful use of unstructured to semi-structured questions.

What About Analysis:

1. Immediately following the FGI, the moderator and assistant moderator should check the tape to see that it worked, and briefly identify the common experiences and perceptions that surfaced during the interview.

2. Within 24 hours following the FGI, and definitely before another FGI is conducted, the moderator and assistant moderator should review the tape, capturing comments using the questioning route as an outline.

3. In final summary, state question. Describe responses in one or two paragraphs. Add three to eight relevant quotations to illustrate. Following quotations, include a paragraph to interpret findings.

STANDARD INTRODUCTION FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Good evening and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion of ___________________. My name is __________________. Assisting me tonight is ____________. We are gathering information about ___________________. We have invited people with similar experiences to share their perceptions and ideas on this topic. You were selected because you have certain things in common that interest us. You are all _______________. We are particularly interested in your views because you are representative of others in _________________ (county, committee, etc.).

Tonight we will be discussing ______________________. This includes __________________. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your point of view, even if it differs from what others have said.

Before we begin, let me remind you of some ground rules. (This is a research project and there are no sales involved. You will not be requested to volunteer or attend any future events or programs.) Please speak up with only one person speaking at a time. We are tape recording the session because we do not want to miss any of your comments. If several are talking at the same time, the tape will become garbled and we will miss your comments. We will be on a first name basis tonight, and in our later reports, there will not be any names associated with comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

Keep in mind that we are just as interested in negative comments as positive ones, and at times, the negative comments are the most important.

Our session will last about hours(s)/minutes . We will not be taking a formal break. The rest rooms are __________ and refreshments are _______________. Feel free to leave the table for either of these, or if you wish to stretch, but please do so quietly. We have placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names.

I am going to ask the first question differently from the remainder of the questions. I will ask the first question, then pause to allow you to form your thoughts. Then I will ask each of you to respond to the first question. After this, anyone may respond to any question or discussion at any time.

Let's begin.......(first question)

REFERENCES

[1] Krueger, Richard A. (1988). *Focus Groups— Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Sage Publications, 2111 West Hillcrest Drive, Newbury Park, California 91320.

[1] Higgenbotham, James B. and Cox, Keith K. (1979). *Focus Group Interviews—A Reader*. American Marketing Association, 222 South Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606, 312-648-0536.

Appendix 3-E

Observation Guides

Appendix 3-E: Observation Guides

Author/Source: Clara Pratt, Ph.D.
Oregon State University, Family Policy Program, 1998

Trained observer ratings are more objective than self-reports and generally more accurate and reliable than casual observations. Achieving accuracy and reliability in observation ratings requires:

- Clearly, consistently defined rating categories
- Carefully trained observers, and
- Consistent supervision and procedures.

When several observers are involved, these requirements are especially critical to maintain accuracy and reliability.

Clearly Defined Rating Systems

Rating systems must define the ratings to be made clearly and consistently. Rating systems typically include either written and/or visual guides to assure observers' consistency in rating what is observed. Two examples of rating scales are shown on the next page.

Written descriptions. These may include observation checklists or scales. The anchor points guide different raters in order to obtain approximately the same rating for a particular condition. At a minimum, anchor points are usually the end and mid-points of the rating scale.

Anchor points provide descriptions and specific examples of behaviors or characteristics for each rating.

Visual rating systems. Visual rating systems use photos, drawings, video clips, or other visuals to represent the various anchor points on the rating scale. Photographic scales are particularly useful when assessing environmental conditions such as the condition of parks and playgrounds, and social interactions in public places.

Combined systems. Sometimes visual and written rating systems are combined to increase understanding and accuracy. For example, a combined system for rating an environment would include visual images and descriptive words to convey the meaning of phrases like "clean and safe." Similarly, a rating scale that assesses feeding interactions may include both pictures of mothers and infants in positive feeding positions as well as verbal descriptions of infant-mother interactions.

Anchor Points Provide

Description: Parent responds positively

Examples: smiles, compliments, touches affectionately, supports

Description: Child responds negatively

Examples: angry, insulting, teasing, non-compliant, aggressive

Descriptions and Examples In Two Rating Scales

Sample From the School Aged Child Care Environments Rating Scale (SACERS)*

This rating scale assesses settings for children ages 5-12. Six dimensions are assessed. Anchor points for one item regarding staff-child interaction dimension are:

1 Inadequate – Staff not responsive to or involved with children (Ex. Ignore or reject children); interactions are unpleasant (Ex. Voices strained, irritable)

3 Minimal – Staff respond inconsistently (Ex. Sometimes warm, sometimes distant); staff favor or dislike particular children

5 Good – Staff respond to children in warm, responsive manner (Ex. Staff and children seem relaxed, frequent smiling, cheerful voices). Staff show respect for children (Ex. Listen attentively, treat all children fairly, do NOT discriminate)

7 Excellent – Staff support autonomous behavior in children (Ex. Allow children to take lead in selecting and initiating activities); mutual respect among staff and children.

*Order from: Teachers College Press, PO Box 2032, Colchester, VT, 054449; 800-445-6638

Carefully Trained Observers

Once rating systems are fully developed, observers must be trained in their use. Accuracy and reliability are achieved only when observers fully understand the rating systems and follow guidelines for observations and data recording.

Training has a clear goal: *different observers should give the same ratings to comparable situations.* Similarly, a single observer should give the same rating to comparable situations at different times. Achieving this goal requires that observers be able to:

- accurately interpret ratings and anchor points,
- carefully observe critical elements in the situation to be rated, and
- competently record findings.

Many people have the observational skills to become effective observers and raters, but it will take time and practice. Often, videotapes are used to guide training and develop essential observation skills.

All rating systems require some training to ensure that observers really understand and can accurately apply the ratings. Training should include practice in applying the rating scales and opportunities to compare and discuss the ratings with other observers. Sometimes training is as simple

All rating systems require training to assure accuracy and reliability.

as spending a couple of hours with a group of observers rating the same event or situation. Ratings are compared and discussed until all observers are able to achieve very similar ratings of the same behaviors or conditions.

- Generally less training is needed when rating systems assess easily observable events or behaviors and have *fully* described anchor points to guide ratings.

- Other rating systems require more extensive training because the situations that are being assessed are complicated and/or the scoring is demanding.

Consistent Supervision and Procedures

Consistent supervision and procedures are the final components in an accurate and reliable observation rating system. Consistency is essential in the training and supervision of observers as well as in the recording and analyzing of data.

It is especially important that the quality of the ratings be periodically checked. For example, every few weeks or months a supervisor might check a small sample of the ratings done by each observer. Periodic checking of ratings across observers assures that observers are continuing to apply the rating scales similarly. Thus systematic checking of ratings helps to build, and retain, accuracy and reliability.

Developing Rating Systems

Developing a rating system is complicated. Simple checklists, while relatively easy to write, demand greater knowledge and skill to accurately apply than do more fully developed rating scales with clear descriptions and examples. That is why many checklists are developed for teachers or others who have professional training.

Established observation rating systems have been empirically demonstrated to accurately and reliably assess behaviors and conditions. These rating systems are valuable tools for assessment. When existing systems do not fit a particular program's needs, they can still be useful. For example, established observation rating systems can be:

- adapted to fit diverse populations or circumstances
- used as guides in the development of new rating systems
- supplemented with other relevant measures

Surveys and other measures can also be useful in developing observation rating scales. Surveys are a good source of descriptions and examples for observation rating systems.

For more information on rating scales and observations, see:

<u>Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach</u>, United Way of America, 1996 *and* the observation/rating scales reviewed throughout <u>Measuring Outcomes: Building Results III</u>. Available from the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, Salem OR.

[i] Krueger, Richard A. (1988). *Focus Groups— Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Sage Publications, 2111 West Hillcrest Drive, Newbury Park, California 91320.

[ii] Higgenbotham, James B. and Cox, Keith K. (1979). *Focus Group Interviews—A Reader*. American Marketing Association, 222 South Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606, 312-648-0536.