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## Conversation Guide

### Having a child and early childhood for low-income families

#### → *For All Conversations*

##### **Introduction**

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. First, we'll start by telling you a little about ourselves, the project, and why we're interested in speaking with you. Then we'll go through the consent form and begin the interview.

We work with the Federal Customer Experience team at the Office of Management and Budget. We're an interdisciplinary team of researchers and designers that work to improve public services.

##### **About the project**

- We are working with the Federal agencies and non-profit research partners to explore the main wants and needs of people during a key life experience: What happens when a family has a child until the child turns 5?
- We hope that by speaking to you, we can better understand the main wants and needs of people experiencing this life event, and how States and the Federal Government can better support them.
- The research we conduct over the next few weeks with other individuals, frontline staff and experts will inform a small set of pilots in September.

##### **Consent**

###### **In-Person Interviews**

Before we get started, we are going to go through our consent process. We'll also leave time for questions.

- *Go through consent form with participant*
- *Pause for any questions*
- *Repeat back consent for NOTES / RECORDING*



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### Remote Interviews

Before we get started, we are going to review your consent form answers.

- We see that you consented to NOTES / RECORDING. Is this still the case?
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

(Skip if we have consent): We do not currently have a consent form on file for you. I'm going to send you a link in the zoom chat box so you can fill it out together before we start.

- Do you have any questions before we begin?

### Compensation (for eligible participants)

- We will provide you with a \$25/\$50 gift card for our conversation. How would you prefer we send this to you?
  - Physical gift card
  - Virtual

### → For Members of the Public

### Background

- Could you start by telling us a little bit about you and your family?
  - (If children): How old are your children?
  - What support are you seeking/receiving from [organization] name?

### Conversation Prompts

- (If children): Could you walk us through your experience welcoming a new child into your family?
  - How were you and your family supported during that time?
    - Health support services: pregnancy, postpartum care, child health visits, social worker services
    - Community models of care: doulas, familial/personal relationships
    - Work: parental leave, maternity leave
    - Public benefit programs: SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, CHIP
    - Child care/Head Start
  - Health support services: Walk us through how you and your family were supported in the immediate period after birth and through age 5?
    - Auto received services or were services requested? ( pregnancy, postpartum care, child health visits, social worker services)
    - Key bright spots on family's end



- Key challenges on family's end (language/literacy barrier, feeling seen/heard/valued)
- Public benefits: Did your family seek any public benefit programs like SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program during that time?
  - Why? Why not?
  - Time of application (postpartum period, months after birth, years later?)
  - Knowledge of program and eligibility requirements?
  - Application process and length? (language/literacy barrier, required documentation, application format, tech access, bright spots & challenges, support from CBOs/ State)
  - Renewal process? (autorenewal v. new application, bright spots & challenges, temporary loss of benefits/ "churn", support from CBOs/ State)
- Child care/Head Start: Did you put your child(ren) in childcare/ Head Start during their early years?
  - Why? Why not?
  - Knowledge of childcare/ Head Start programs and eligibility requirements?
  - Cost & physical access to child care centers?

### **Key Wants & Needs**

- Are there things that you think worked well during birth and early childhood?
  - (repeat back any bright spots and ask them why it worked well)
  - Thoughts on making [process/thing] universal across the U.S.?
- Are there any ways you think the government could (have) better support you and your family during birth and early childhood?
  - (repeat back any challenges mentioned above and ask them how they wish they would have been addressed)
  - What do you wish you knew or had access to?
  - Probes
    - Health support programs during pregnancy/postpartum?
    - Preference for enrolling in benefits/child care? (preferred time to apply & receive benefits, application process)
    - Preference for checking benefits?
    - Preference updating benefit information?
    - Preference for maintaining benefits?



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## Wrap-up

- Is there anything else you want to share about you or your experience with the life event we discussed today?
- We will be talking to a few more individuals before we wrap up research. Would you have any friends/family who might be interested in talking to us about their experience? We will compensate them \$25/\$50 for a 45-60-minute interview.
- If you have questions about the research process, or want to follow up about this interview at any point, please contact Amira Boland at [Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov](mailto:Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov). You can also reach to any of us (state emails)
- *Go through Post-Interview Checklist*



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## → For Frontline Staff

### Background

- Could you start by telling us a little bit about you and the work you do?
  - Length of employment?
  - Day-to-day work experience?
  - Nature of interactions with families experiencing the birth of a child and early childhood

### Conversation Guide

#### Services and Programs

*What kind of direct support do you provide families with?*

- Health support services: pregnancy, postpartum care, child health visits, social worker services
- Childcare/ Head Start programs  
Financial coach/advisor
- Public benefit programs: SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, CHIP

Health support services: Walk us through how you support families in the immediate period after birth and through age 5.

- How are families referred to you/ connected with you?
- Key bright spots on frontline staff end
- Key challenges on frontline staff end (time, resources, language barriers, system/tech challenges)
- Key bright spots on family's end
- Key challenges on family's end (language/literacy barrier, required documentation, application format & length, tech access)

Child care/ Head Start: Walk us through how you support families in applying for childcare or Head start programs.

- How are families referred to you/ connected with you?
- Common time of application (postpartum period, months after birth, years later?)
- Cost of child care at your center?
- Key bright spots on frontline staff end
- Key challenges on frontline staff end (time, resources, language barriers, system/tech challenges)



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- Key bright spots on family's end
- Key challenges on family's end (language/literacy barrier, required documentation, application format & length, tech access, physical access to sites, cost)

### Key Wants and Needs

- Are there things that you think are currently working well?
  - *(repeat back any bright spots and ask them why it worked well)*
  - Thoughts on making [process/thing] universal across the U.S.?
- Are there any ways you think the government could better support you in your role?
  - *(repeat back any challenges mentioned above and ask them how they wish it would have been addressed)*
  - What do you wish you knew or had access to?
- Probes
  - Health support programs during pregnancy/postpartum?
  - Preference for enrolling families in benefits/child care? (preferred time to apply & receive benefits, application process)
  - Preference for checking on families' benefits?
  - Preference for updating families' benefits information?

### Wrap-up

- Is there anything else you want to share about your experience people raising children 0-5?
- We will be talking to a few more staff before we wrap up research. Would you have any colleagues who might be interested in talking to us about their experience? We will compensate them \$ for a 30-45-minute interview.
- If you have questions about the research process, or want to follow up about this interview at any point, please contact Amira Boland at [Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov](mailto:Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov). You also have our email addresses cc'd on the outreach email.
- *Go through Post-Interview Checklist*



## → *For Subject Matter Experts*

### **Background**

- Could you start by telling us a little about you and your role?
  - Day-to-day work experience?
  - Who do you most commonly partner with in your work? (other agencies, NGOs, etc.)
  - What are your main interactions with the Federal Government?

### **Program Overview and Public Experience**

First, let's walk through the support available to low-income families having a child and managing early childhood

- What programs, services, or benefits are available to families in this situation in your state?
  - Probes:
    - Does your state offer any holistic programming around health?
    - Does your state have any community-based care models?
  - Which of these programs have you found to be most effective?
  - How do you measure the success of these programs?
- What are the enrollment and re-certification processes like for these programs?
- What are the most common challenges you find people have with these programs?
- Which communities, groups, or demographics do you have a harder/easier time reaching with these programs?
  - Do any of the groups experience greater churn?

### **Program Administration**

Let's talk about the administrative side of these programs.

- Have there been any recent big changes to how these programs operate in your state?
  - What improvements are you currently most focused on achieving in these programs?
- What do you see as being the biggest challenges in the administration of these programs?
  - [State administrators only] What are the most common challenges your staff face?
- Has your state taken any steps towards offering more integrated benefits?
  - If yes:
    - What has been hard/easy?



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- What administrative and process changes has this required for you?
  - What barriers are you still facing?
- If no:
  - What would be the main barriers towards attempting this in your state?
- How are you feeling about the unwinding of the Public Health Emergency?
  - Are you anticipating challenges with this in your state?
  - Is there a plan for what actions will be taken in relation to it?

### **Key Wants and Needs**

- [State administrators only] How could the Federal Government support you more around these programs (integrated benefits etc.)?
- If you had a magic wand, what's one thing you would change about how your state supports people raising children 0-5?

### **Wrap Up**

- Is there anything else that you think we should know?
- If you have questions about the research process, or want to follow up about this interview at any point, please contact Amira Boland at [Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov](mailto:Amira.C.Boland@omb.eop.gov). You also have our email addresses cc'd on the outreach email.
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