**FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR WMTY PARTNERS**

# Background on WIC What Matters to You Project

In 2019, Public Health Solutions received funding from the [Hopkins/USDA Participant Research](https://www.jhsph.edu/departments/population-family-and-reproductive-health/projects/hopkins-usda-participant-research-innovation-laboratory-for-enhancing-wic-services/) [Innovation Laboratory](https://www.jhsph.edu/departments/population-family-and-reproductive-health/projects/hopkins-usda-participant-research-innovation-laboratory-for-enhancing-wic-services/) (HPRIL) to implement **WIC What Matters to You** (WMTY) a participant-centered WIC retention project that focuses on participants with the highest risk of dropping out of the program (children turning ages 1 and 2), identifies the highest priority needs of the parents and caregivers of enrolled children coming up on their first and second birthdays through a [“what matters to you”](http://www.ihi.org/Topics/WhatMatters/Pages/default.aspx) approach and connects them with services to address those needs by making closed-loop referrals to coordinated, accountable network of community-based partners. By connecting participants to services and benefits to address their highest priority needs we hope to reduce barriers to WIC participation, increase utilization of issued benefits, and improve rates of recertification for WIC.

# Project Goal

Evaluate a participant-centered approach to co-location and service coordination as a retention strategy, with a focus on the developmental stages where families are most at-risk for loss to follow-up.

# Project Objectives

**Objective 1:**

Systematically identify participant barriers to recertification and uncover social needs using a “what matters to you” approach by screening a minimum of 500 mothers or caregivers for all enrolled infant at 6-9 months and child at 18-21 months at intervention sites throughout the intervention.

# Objective 2:

Facilitate access of families with an identified need to available resources from a network of local services using a closed-loop electronic referral system.

# Objective 3:

Analyze improvement, through pre-post performance at intervention sites, as well as between intervention and control sites; analyze participant retention by level of engagement with other services and explore how the patient-centered approach and targeted referrals may both address barriers to participation and enhance the overall value of WIC after infancy.

**Evaluation**

The evaluation for this project will involve a quasi-experimental, mixed-methods approach. The two intervention sites for our project are **WIC-Corona** and **WIC-Ocean Avenue**. The comparison site for our project is **WIC-Ridgewood**.

# Focus Group Staff Roles

Each focus group will be staffed by one facilitator and one notetaker. Details about each person’s

responsibilities are outlined below.

# Role of Facilitator

* + *Recommendation:* Check out this [Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups](https://ctb.ku.edu/sites/default/files/chapter_files/toolkitforconductingfocusgroups-omni.pdf)
  + Introduce self and notetaker to the group; facilitate quick intros
  + Facilitate the conversation
  + Keep the group on time
  + Record the meeting in RingCentral
  + Thank people for coming at the beginning and the end
  + Review the purpose of the group and the goals for the meeting
  + Go over the flow of the meeting
  + Elicit opinion, don’t judge it
    - Make sure that all opinions on each question get a chance to be heard
      * Summarize what you think you heard, and ask if the group agrees
      * Phrase the same question in a different way, use probes
      * Ask if anyone else has any comments on a question
      * When all your questions have been asked, and before the group ends, ask if anyone has any other comments to make
  + Ensure everyone gets to participate, the conversation shouldn’t be dominated one or

two individuals

* + - when encountering a dominant personality, you can shift attention to other speakers, by calling on them by name to share their opinion
    - if someone is more reserved, you can invite this person to answer a question; encourage them with smile and nods
    - Ensure participants that their individual opinion is essential to the success of the focus group
  + Keep the group and discussion on topic
    - If the conversation is going off topic, wait for a breath or pause, quickly interrupt, and call on another participant or bring the group back to the objectives
    - Repeat the question

# Role of Notetaker

* + Introduce self to the group
  + Help the facilitator keep the meeting on time
    - Let the facilitator know when 45 mins left (half way through), 15 min left, 5 min left through 1:1 chat in RingCentral
  + Record the meeting using a backup method (e.g. voice memo on your cell phone)
  + Capture key quotes and major themes of the discussion
  + Ask for clarification if you don’t understand something someone said
    - If you weren’t able to understand something, ask people to repeat or clarify

what they said

* + In addition to verbatim notes and quotes, write down contextual notes about the focus group
    - Note impressions or insights that describe the “feel” of the focus group
    - Did people enter late or leave early?
    - Were people particularly interested in any specific question?
    - Any non-verbal agreement or dissent?
  + Finalize notes (cleaning and adding reflections) within 24 hours of the focus group
  + Clearly delineate between verbatim notes and your perceptions/reflections in the notes

# \*INTRODUCTION\*

**FACILITATOR:**

Before we get started, I wanted to ask if everyone is okay with me recording the meeting? **[Ask for an**

# audible “yes” or “okay” from everyone]

I am going to start recording the meeting now. The notetaker is also recording the meeting so we have a backup. **[START RECORDING THE MEETING]**

Hello, my name is [FACILITATOR NAME] and I will your facilitator today. We are also joined by [NOTETAKER NAME] who will be taking notes during today’s focus group. *Facilitator and Notetaker should also feel free to mention role at PHS in intro.*

The purpose of this focus group is to learn more about your experiences as part of the WIC What Matters to You project. Your participation is completely voluntary; you can choose to leave the RingCentral Meeting at any time with no impact.

This focus group will be recorded and later transcribed. A couple of things to note before we get started:

* The group will run for about 75 minutes. I’ll be keeping track of time and our notetaker,

[NOTETAKER NAME] will also be helping us keep track of time so we can end on time.

* I want to make sure we hear from everyone so I might end up calling on individual people who haven’t been speaking up very much, just to make sure we hear from everyone. It doesn’t mean you did anything bad or wrong.
* I might ask you to explain a little more or give examples, so just we all really understand your perspective. It is not a reflection on what you shared.
* There are no right or wrong answers here. All perspectives are welcome, as long as we are all respectful of one another.
* You don’t have to turn on your camera if you don’t want to.
* You can leave at any time. Your participation is encouraged, but completely voluntary.

Are there any questions before we get started?

# [PAUSE FOR QUESTIONS FROM THE GROUP]

As a community partner in the WIC What Matters to You network you received referrals, worked on cases, documented the outcomes of these outcomes, and participated in various network activities such as quarterly meetings, 1:1 meetings, and evaluation activities, like this focus group. During today’s focus group we are going review you experience as a member of this network and, in particular, revisit your experiences with referral management, using Unite Us, and participating in network activities, and your thoughts on sustaining partnership.

# Section 1. Referral Management Software

1. How does your experience using Unite Us for referral management compare to systems you have used in the past or other systems you are using currently?
   1. Probe: What are strengths of the Unite Us platform?
   2. Probe: What are weaknesses of the Unite Us platform?
   3. Probe: What would you change, if anything, about Unite Us?

# Section 2. Referral Quality, Workflow, and Outcomes

1. For those of you that received referrals, tell me about the quality of referrals you received throughout the project from the WIC What Matters to You project sites.
   1. Probe: Were they mostly appropriate? Inappropriate?
   2. Probe: What made for a good referral?
   3. Probe: What were typical reasons referrals were rejected? Or closed as unresolved?
2. What factors influenced the likelihood that clients referred to your program would be successfully connected to services?
   1. Probe: What factors would have increased the likelihood that referred clients were successfully connected to services?
3. What feedback or reflections did you receive from clients about the referral, intake, and/or enrollment process?
4. Can you tell me about your experience communicating with WIC or WIC What Matters to You Project Staff?
   1. Probe: If there was a pre-existing relationship with WIC, how did things differ as part of this project?
   2. Probe: What about communication for the purpose of referral?
5. Can you tell me about your experience communicating other organizations in the WIC What Matters to You network?
   1. Probe: How was your experience with Unite Us different (if they had been doing this before)?
   2. Probe: What about communication for the purpose of referral?

# Section 3. Sustainability

1. If we did this project all over again, what would you have liked to be done differently?
   1. Probe: What modifications would have made the project easier to implement? For example, more time per participant, collecting information via paper or form in the waiting room, changes to workflow for identifying participants?
   2. Probe: What were barriers to implementation? How could they have been overcome?
2. Can you tell me about your overall experience as a member of the WIC What Matters to You network?
   1. Probe: What aspects of the network were valuable to your organization?
   2. Probe: How does your experience in this network differ from experience in other networks/partnerships?
3. What impact do you feel your services have on the lives of the WIC clients referred to you?
   1. Probe: Short-term impact? Long-term impact?
   2. Probe: How does the impact of your services differ between WIC clients and clients referred from other projects.
4. Do you want to continue the partnership with PHS WIC? Why or why not?

# \*WRAP UP\*

**FACILITATOR:** Any final comments on anything we discussed before we wrap up the meeting? [PAUSE FOR FINAL COMMENTS FROM THE GROUP]

Thank you everyone for your time and feedback today. Your comments are critical to understanding the impact of this project. The recording of today’s focus group will be recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and be one piece of several in the overall evaluation of the WIC What Matters to You project. Final results for the project should be available in Summer 2021.

Thank you again for your time. I will now stop the recording. **[STOP THE RECORDING]**