



Next Generation Youth Work Coalition
Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator's Script: *The purpose of our discussion today is to talk about your specific experiences as a youth worker, in order to increase our understanding of who youth workers are, how they are (and are not) supported in the workplace, and what it will take to attract, develop and sustain youth workers in the future. By "youth workers" we mean individuals who work with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence. You may refer to yourselves or be referred to by others in different ways, including after-school worker, coach, or out-of-school time program staff. That's fine – "youth worker" as we are using it is inclusive of all of those.*

Introductions and Ice-breaker Discussion

(5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and tell us how long you have been involved in youth work (go around the room).

Reviewing the Purpose and Ground Rules

(5 minutes)

The purpose of our session is to discuss your specific experiences as a youth worker. We would like you to focus on your entry into the field, support on the job, and youth work as a profession. During our discussion today, we will be spending time on four general questions:

1. What brought you to this work and why?
2. How supported do you feel in your job?
3. What keeps you in this work?
4. What is needed for youth work to be a strong and valued profession?

General Ground Rules:

1. Please talk in a voice as loud as mine.
2. Talk one at a time, and please avoid any side conversations with your neighbors.
3. Try to remember to say your name (or the name you'd like us to use during the focus group) before you speak. If you forget, I'll try to state your name after you've spoken.
4. Not everyone has to answer every single question, but make sure we hear from each of you today as the discussion progresses.
5. You do not need to address all of your comments to me to get them on the table. You can respond directly to someone who has made a point.
6. Speak openly and honestly about your opinions. If you have different opinions than someone else in the room on the issues we discuss, please make sure to express those opinions.

I. Entry into the Field

(10-15 minutes)

READ: Let's start our discussion talking about your entry into the field. What brought you to this work and why?

PROMPT:

- What other kinds of work did you do previously?
- What kind of educational background do you have?
- Why did you decide to do this kind of work?

II. Support on the Job/Job Satisfaction

(10-15 minutes)

READ: We now want to talk about your job satisfaction as a youth worker. How supported do you feel in your job?

PROMPT:

- When you started working with kids, did you feel prepared?
- What kind of training/professional development opportunities do you wish you had to prepare for this job? What kind do you feel you need now?
- Do you feel you are well compensated for this work (not just salary but benefits, working conditions, recognition, etc.)?
- How satisfied are you overall with your decision to do youth work?

III. Retention

(10-15 minutes)

READ: We've talked about how you entered this field, and the support you feel in your job. Now we're interested in your thoughts about staying in or leaving this field. What has kept you doing this work for as long as you have?

PROMPT:

- How long do you think you will stay in this field?
- What makes you want to go to work? What is motivating about this field?
- If you think you're going to leave the field soon, why would you be deciding to leave?
- What factors would most influence your decision to stay or leave?

IV. Youth Work as a Career

(10-15 minutes)

READ: Finally, we are interested in your thoughts of youth work as a profession. Based on your experiences, do you consider this a viable career?

PROMPT:

- How do you refer to the kind of work you do – what do you call it?
- Do you see what you are doing as a career?
- Do you feel like that youth work is a legitimate profession or field?
- How do others perceive your work?