

Youth Focus Group Facilitation Guide

1.0 Overview

The LGBTQ2S Toolkit will be an online resource that will enable organizations to better support LGBTQ2S youth. One of the main goals of this Toolkit is to ensure street-involved youth service providers have resources (policy, procedures and staff training) to support LGBTQ2S youth; and that these resources are rooted in the views and opinions of LGBTQ2S youth. We also want to make available resources for organizations attempting to make this change who may not know where to start. This will include intake form templates, strategies for respecting a youth's identity while still meeting legal requirements, and others.

The goal for the youth engagement portion will be to see the youth's perspectives and solutions for the scenarios we present.

2.0 Objectives

Youth Focus Groups are an important method for service providers to hear and begin to understand the experiences of LGBTQ2S youth who access our programs. The structure of the focus groups needs to allow for youth to share their experiences in a space and way that they feel comfortable with. The goal is to have focus groups in the 12 Learning Community member cities. Ideally there will be 8-12 youth per focus group.

The purpose of this guide is to enable the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness to have consistent focus group data to work with. This guide will standardize the focus groups, but there are opportunities to adapt the materials to fit your local context.

3.0 Focus Group Structure

Focus groups will be scheduled for 2.5 hours.

- 15 minutes -- starts with food
- 30 minutes -- check-in exercise
- 90 minutes-- scenarios
- 15 minutes -- check out exercise

3.1 What to Provide:

Meals: Food security is a big factor to homeless youth. By providing a meal you are creating a welcoming space. Also you are ensuring that participants have fuel to be at their best during the focus group.

Transportation: This is important as most youth have little in the way of the ability to travel about their cities, and put a decent amount of effort into mapping where they have to go and how to get there. By providing transportation, you are making your focus group accessible to those youth.

Honourarium: An honourarium accomplishes two things, one is creating incentive for your focus group. Money is tight when you are homeless and anything helps, so by providing this, you are encouraging a bigger turn out. Secondly you are letting the youth know that their time and opinions are valuable, and you are willing to pay them for providing it.

4.0 Logistics

4.1 Location

Host the Focus Group offsite. The reason for hosting these off site where possible is two fold, the first being access. Not all youth will want, or be able to go to your organization. Choosing a neutral, open, and welcoming location is key to creating an environment the people feel secure sharing in. Second is confidentiality/safety, some youth will not feel safe discussing their views on an organization, while being IN that organization.

4.2 Size and Composition

As with most focus groups the goal is to have between 8 and 12 youth present. This will give a good mix of voices and experiences for the session.

It is important to have a diverse group. Please consider connecting with other local organizations to try to find youth who may not access your service. It is important that we hear why they do not access services that they need (e.g. concerns about safety).

4.3 Timing

- 2.5 - 3 hours
- 15 min: food/intro
 - This is time for the youth to get settled, grab something to eat, and meet each other briefly, followed by a quick run down of what it is we will be doing through the focus group.
- 20 min: check in
 - The check-in will consist of a warm up exercise to break the ice and to assist in having the youth become slightly more familiar with each other and you as the facilitator. No notes are taken during the check in.
- 90 min: scenarios
 - This section will largely be taken up with the presentation of various scenarios that LGBTQ2S street involved youth might run in to on a regular basis. This will include intake with shelters, early interactions with staff at a drop-in centre, or the short interactions they would have with workshop staff.
 - Once we present these scenarios, the youth will come with ways these situations could be handled to make them feel comfortable, supported, and respected when in these situations. We want to hear the solutions youth want to see. We will also have a time for any questions the youth have, including scenarios they feel should also be addressed.
- 20 min: check-out
 - The check-out will be similar to the check-in, though more focused on feedback on how the focus group went, their feelings coming away from this, and to offer closure to the session.

4.4 Materials

it is recommended that you bring the following materials to the focus group:

- flip chart paper
- marker
- evaluation forms
- list for honorarium (first name, received)
- check out exercise page
- list of resources available

5.0 Definitions for Focus Groups

5.1 Categories of Services

We have developed the following categories to define the different ways youth utilise our services:

1. Programs-- Such as emergency shelters, employment programs, education programs, and more. These will typically be longer and/or repeating programs.
2. Workshops-- Similar to programs, but typically on a shorter basis, such as one session, or one run before ending.
3. Drop-Ins-- This would include drop-in programs as well as drop-in centres. This differs from programs as they are typically less structure and allow youth to come and go as they please. They also have less paperwork (no intake process, case management etc.).

5.2 Stages of Engagement with Youth

We have identified three stages of engagement with youth that occurs in youth organizations:

Intake: This is the process of first entering the shelter which includes filling out the information forms (name, identification, learning the rules), and typically getting your tour of the building/introduction to staff you need to know (your caseworker, where frontline staff will be, etc)

Case Management: This includes the name they refer to the youth as, needs assessment of the youth, and working out goals and plans for/with the youth.

Exit: This is commonly referred to as Discharge, though that largely carries the negative connotation of being kicked out. What it means is whenever you leave the shelter, by choice or forcibly. This typically includes the closing of your file, referral to another service, and coordinating the moving of your belongings if required.

5.3 Themes

In our surveys of organizations and staff we identified the following five themes:

Policy and procedures: these are important because they set the rules that govern the organization, and with policy and procedures offering a clear depiction of what is right and wrong, it is clearer on what action should be taken on those who break them, such as LGBTQ2S protection policies.

Training: there are often limited training options available for organizations, and what is available is not always accessible, so what training an organization ensures its staff have is important.

Community partners/referrals: Knowing what programs are out there for the youth in your care, and knowing which ones may or may not be a good fit, is a very important skill. Knowing that perhaps another program or shelter might be able to help someone more than your own, and getting that referral through, can make a big difference to a struggling LGBTQ2S youth.

Internal LGBTQ2S programs/groups: Having groups to support your LGBTQ2S clients is very important as it sends a message of not only acceptance but, more importantly, awareness and concern for the youth.

Physical space: Ensuring that the space feels supportive and comfortable to LGBTQ2S youth is a big step in being supportive. You could have all of the best policies in the world, but if the space does not feel welcoming, people will not feel welcome.

In our focus groups we will be focusing on 3 of the 5 themes:

- Policy and Procedures
- Training
- Physical space

We have prioritized these 3 themes due in part to only having 2.5 hours for the focus groups. Also these 3 have the most direct impact on youth. Ensuring that policies are in place to ensure their support, comfort, and respect, training to ensure staff know these policies and how to interact with LGBTQ2S youth, and having a warm, welcoming space will lead to people feeling wanted instead of tolerated.

6.0 Focus Group Materials

For the focus group session, you should have the following:

- flip chart paper
- markers
- check out exercise handout
- evaluation forms

6.1 Check In

Please take a few minutes at the start of the group to remind participants that the focus group is a space where people can share their experiences and ideas without judgement.

As the group to share their name and preferred pronoun with the group.

Prior to the ice breaker, please take 5 minutes to ask the group for the group guidelines. Usually group guidelines include:

- no cellphones
- no side conversations
- what is said in the group stays in the group

Write the list on a piece of flipchart paper and post it in a space that is visible for the group to see. You or participants can refer to it during the session if needed.

6.1.1 Ice Breaker Samples

1. Ask the group “What made you want to participate in this focus group?”
2. Twenty Questions

Have the facilitator pick the subject (try to stay to topics that relate to the focus group) and have the youth ask the questions, this will ensure a quicker game than if you split into groups. To decide the order of guessing, you can either have the youth get in a circle, see who raised first, name in a hat, or whatever you find most effective.

3. Name Circle

Have a piece of chart paper ready, and pick a youth to start. Each youth, from the one you choose to the last (going clockwise) then shares their name, and adjective starting with the same letter, and their preferred pronoun. Write these on to the paper and leave them up in the room. (e.g. My name is Rose, my adjective is Recursive, and I use the pronoun They. facilitator writes Recursive Rose, They)

4. Word link

This is a word association game. Ask the group to sit in a circle. The first person starts with any word they wish i.e. red. The next person repeats the first word and adds another word which links to the

first i.e. tomato. The next person repeats the previous word and add another word link i.e. soup, and so on. To keep this moving, only allow five seconds for each word link.

6.2 Scenarios

The focus groups will be asked to respond to scenarios and offer their feedback on how organizations can ensure that the youth feel supported, comfortable, and respected.

We identified 3 stages of youth interaction with the services (Programs, Workshops, and Drop-ins). These stages are Intake, case management, and exiting. In each of these three stages, the three different programs must be considered.

The following are the scenarios that all focus groups will be responding to. This will help to ensure that we get consistent answers that we can use to determine the training and resource needs of youth organizations. There is 90 minutes to get through all the scenarios. You may want to advise participants that you will save some time and go back to scenarios after they all have been reviewed to see if any participants have any additional thoughts.

6.2.1 Housing

- Intake: What would the shelter intake process look like for you to feel comfortable, supported and respected?
- Case Management: What do you need to feel comfortable, supported and respected during your stay at a shelter/in housing?
- Exiting: What do you need from the shelter and/or staff to feel comfortable, supported and respected during your exit process?

6.2.2 Drop-in

- Intake: What would the first 15 minutes look like at a drop-in for you to feel comfortable, supported and respected?
- Case Management: After that 15 minutes, what do you need to feel comfortable, supported and respected?

6.2.3 Complaint Response Process

What steps would a shelter and it's staff have to take to properly respond to an incident of transphobia or homophobia?

6.2.4 Physical Space

What are the features that make spaces feel comfortable, supportive and respectful. For example, washrooms, layout, signage, confidential meeting spaces where you can talk privately with staff.

6.2.5 Training

What type of training do you feel staff require to better support LGBTQ2S youth?

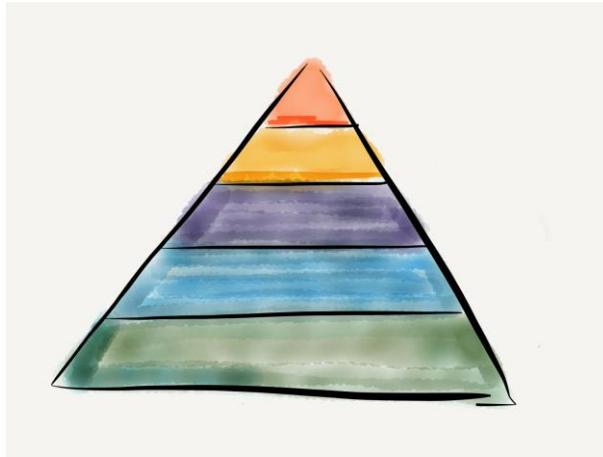
6.3 Check Out

The check out exercise we have developed is a diagram that we can add to the online Toolkit. Most folks are familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (<http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>). Basically the idea is that people need to have their needs met on one level before they can move to the next.

For this check out we would like youth to share not only what their needs in relation to accessing a shelter or drop-in are, but in what order they look for them to be met, which is a great exercise in self inspection. For example, some youth may need to feel safe in a space. Once they feel safe they need to feel like they have peer support

(community). After this they may need staff to be supportive. Finally they need to feel included in the community of the space. Some youth who are participating may not access services because they don't feel comfortable, supported and respected.

Focus group participants will be given a sheet of paper with the diagram below on it. They will be asked to identify what their first need is to for them to access services for street-involved youth and place it on the bottom tier, and from there, work their way up based on what need(s) they would seek to have filled next.



7.0 Data Collection

Facilitators will be responsible for submitting notes from the Focus Groups. It would be helpful that in addition to the facilitator that there also be a note taker. In both scenarios, it would be best to use flip chart paper to record the responses of the participants. This has two benefits. The first is that it gives youth the opportunity to see what has been said and give them an opportunity to make sure what is being recorded represents what they are telling us. Second it gives the facilitator notes for their report. Facilitators can type out their notes into the Data Collection Form (see Appendix A). The Data Collection Form will also ask for the facilitators comments on the focus group.

8.0 Evaluation

The last 5-10 minutes of the Focus Group will be spent completing an evaluation of the Focus Group. As with all evaluations this is important as it will us the opportunity to tweak future Focus Groups. Please see Appendix B for the Evaluation Form.

9.0 Submission of Data

Data Collection Forms and Evaluations will be emailed to lgbtqtoolkit@evas.ca for data entry. The Youth Engagement Worker will develop a Youth Engagement Report using these documents as the primary source materials. The Youth Engagement Report will be shared with focus group facilitators and Learning Community members. The Report will inform the training materials and tools offered in the online Toolkit.

10.0 Feedback Loop for Youth

It is important that there is a process for facilitators to be able to check in with focus group participants to confirm that notes taken during the focus group are accurate. We also need to be able to keep youth updated about the progress of the Toolkit. One way to do this is to use flip chart paper and write down responses as they are given in the session. And prior to moving onto the next scenario recap the answers and ask for confirm from the group that the notes are accurate.

Another method is to ask youth for their email addresses and email them the completed Data Collection Form after it is completed. Facilitators can choose to remove their feedback comments prior to sending to youth participants.

We also may also post compiled responses on the Toolkit site to have a space where youth can go to read responses and comment on the site to give their feedback.

Appendix A -- Data Collection Form

Please use this form to record the responses from your focus group. Having standardized focus group questions and a data collection template means we will have consistent data for the Toolkit. A printable version will be shared.

6.2.1 Housing

Intake: What would the shelter intake process look like for you to feel comfortable, supported and respected?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

Case Management: What do you need to feel comfortable, supported and respected during your stay at a shelter/in housing?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

Exiting: What do you need from the shelter and/or staff to feel comfortable, supported and respected during your exit process?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.2.2 Drop-in

Intake: What would the first 15 minutes look like at a drip-in for you to feel comfortable, supported and respected?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

Case Management: After that 15 minutes, what do you need to feel comfortable, supported and respected?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.2.3 Complaint Response Process

What steps would a shelter and it's staff have to take to properly respond to an incident of transphobia or homophobia?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.2.4 Physical Space

What are the features that make spaces feel comfortable, supportive and respectful. For example washrooms, layout, signage, confidential meeting spaces where you can talk private with staff.

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.2.5 Training

What type of training do you feel staff require to better support LGBTQ2S youth?

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.2.5 Communications Question

Question

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

6.3 Check Out

Question

Responses:

Facilitators Comments:

Appendix B -- Focus Group Evaluation

Please use this form for participants in your focus group to offer their feedback on the session. A printable version will be shared.

Focus Group Evaluation

Thank you for attending our focus group. By sharing your thoughts and insights you are helping the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness design its LGBTQ2S Toolkit. This Toolkit will enable youth organizations to better support LGBTQ2S youth.

Please rate the following:

Your overall experience of participating in the Focus Group Poor Satisfactory Good Excellent	Comments:
The food provided Poor Satisfactory Good Excellent	Comments:
The check in activity Poor Satisfactory Good Excellent	Comments:
Scenarios asked Poor Satisfactory Good Excellent	Comments:
The check out activity Poor Satisfactory Good Excellent	Comments:

How did you hear about the Focus Group (select all that apply):

- friend told me about it
- poster
- presentation
- worker told me about it
- other (please list) _____

Why did you attend the Focus Group (select all that apply):

- honourarium
- food
- transit fare
- opportunity to share experiences and insights
- opportunity to have input

What would you change about the Focus Group if you could?

What would you keep the same about the Focus Group?

What is the most important thing that organizations can do to better support homeless LGBTQ2S youth?

Thank you again for participating in the Focus Group.

If you have any questions