

# **Sample Protocol for Individual Interviews, Focus Groups, and Community Meetings**

1. Begin with one facilitator providing introductory comments:
  - a. Welcome and thank everyone for volunteering to participate.
  - b. Introduce yourself, the cofacilitator, and the note taker.
  - c. Hand out the consent form.
2. Ask participants to review, ask any questions, and then sign the consent form. Offer a copy of the consent form (unsigned) to each person. Some will want a copy, others will not, but always offer.
3. Give a very brief overview of the project and goals for the focus group or interview. For example, “We are talking to you to find out about the services that exist for crime victims with disabilities. We would like to find out what works and what does not work, and how community agencies can improve services.”
4. Give participants information about the process, times, breaks, outside smoking areas, bathrooms, service animal relief areas, and so forth.
5. Distribute name tags for focus groups or community meetings (first names only).

6. Provide basic guidelines for the focus group or community meeting, review them with participants, and consider posting them for everyone to see. Adapt pertinent guidelines for individual interviews:
  - a. If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting, you have the right to leave or to pass on any question. There is no consequence for leaving. Being here is voluntary.
  - b. The meeting is not a counseling session or support group.
  - c. Someone will be available after the meeting if you need support, and we will provide information about local victim service resources.
  - d. Keep personal stories “in the room”; do not share the identity of the attendees or what anybody else said outside of the meeting.
  - e. Everyone’s ideas will be respected. Do not comment on or make judgments about what someone else says, and do not offer advice.
  - f. One person talks at a time.
  - g. It’s okay to take a break if needed or to help yourself to food or drink (if provided).
  - h. Everyone has the right to talk. The facilitator may ask someone who is talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk and may ask a person who isn’t talking if he or she has anything to share.
  - i. Everybody has the right to pass on a question.

- j. There are no right or wrong answers.
  - k. Does anybody have any questions?
7. Let people know that project staff will be taking notes about what is discussed, but that individual names or identifying information will not be attached to comments.
  8. An opening question can help break the ice and should be easy to answer. A first question can be as simple as “How did you find out about this focus group (or interview)?” Your goal is to put the group at ease while keeping the focus on getting the information you need.
  9. Key questions for any focus group or interviews—whether it is crime victims with disabilities or service providers—will focus on the experiences of crime victims with disabilities or service providers, how community services for crime victims with disabilities are working effectively or ineffectively, and what improvements can be made.
  10. Let people know when you are going to ask the last question. This cues participants to share relevant information that may not have come up in answer to your key questions. For example, “Is there anything else you want to share that we haven’t talked about yet?”
  11. For individual interviews and focus groups with crime victims with disabilities, remind participants that they can stay and talk to someone after the meeting if needed. Also tell everyone that if they or anyone they know has been abused, that it was not their fault and help is available.

12. Develop resource cards. Include contacts for local crime victim services, crisis services such as domestic violence and sexual assault services, disability advocacy services, and counseling services and explain each briefly.

13. Thank all for participating.