

# ADOLESCENT & YOUNG ADULT MEN FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE



SCHOOL-BASED  
HEALTH ALLIANCE  
Redefining Health for Kids and Teens



Healthy Teen Network

## Adolescent & Young Adult Men Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Prepared originally as an activity of the Young Male Well Visit Project and adapted for wider use.

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### About the Young Male Well Visit Project

American Sexual Health Association, Healthy Teen Network, Partnership for Male Youth, and School-Based Health Alliance collaborated in 2015 to increase adolescent and young adult men's (AYAM) access to and utilization of primary care, reproductive, and other health services, including immunizations from preventable diseases. Boys and young men are underrepresented in health care utilization. Through the Young Male Well Visit Project, the collaborating organizations seek to reverse this disparity by delivering AYAM male-friendly educational materials to youth and their families, clinical materials for health care providers, and inclusion training to youth-supporting professionals and volunteers. The project's products and services will elevate the importance of health care to boys and young men, their parents, and other caring adults.

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## AYA MEN FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE



Focus groups are one research method available for conducting exploratory research to gather information from beneficiaries. This focus group activity is designed to gather information from adolescent and/or young adult men (AYAM) of various races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. This publication will prove useful to organizations that seek to uncover information about AYAM attitudes about general health and sexual and reproductive health, AYAM sources of health information, and AYAM experiences with well visits.

## FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

**Responsibilities as a focus group facilitator are as follows:**

1. Identify a date, time, and location for the focus group.
2. Determine the target age range of the focus group participants. We recommend grouping participants ages 14 through 16 together, ages 17 through 19 together, and ages 20 through 24 together.
3. Recruit focus group participants. The participants shall self-identify as male; be between ages 14 and 24; be of any race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or school status; and agree to participate in a focus group of about 90-minutes duration.
4. Form a focus group of between eight and 12 participants. (Please invite about 15 to account for no-shows).
5. Provide a meal or refreshments to participants.
6. Provide and disburse a non-cash honorarium to participants.
7. Disseminate and collect an informed consent form from each participant.
8. Provide one individual to moderate the focus group.
9. Provide one individual to assist the facilitator with such tasks as distributing forms, taking notes on flip chart paper, taking typed or written notes, monitoring the recording device, etc. (This second individual could be an adolescent or young adult, who would be provided the same honorarium as other participants but would not participate in the group.)
10. Audiorecord the focus group session.
11. Prepare a focus group feedback report.
12. Store informed consent forms and other activity materials in a private and confidential location and manner.

## FOCUS GROUP SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

**Gather or purchase the following supplies in advance of the focus group convening:**

1. Food and beverages for participants
2. Plates, napkins, glasses, and cutlery
3. Name badge stickers
4. Participant honoraria
5. AYA Men Focus Group Facilitator Guide
6. Informed consent forms (15 copies)
7. Digital audio recording device with an output port
8. Power supply for audio recording device (spare batteries or electric cord)
9. Flip chart
10. Flip chart stand
11. Color coding labels (i.e., dots)
12. Markers
13. Masking tape
14. Pens or pencils (x20)
15. Note pads for participants (x15)
16. Clip boards (x15, optional)
17. Legal-size envelope (for collection of forms)
18. Paper pad (for facilitator assistant note taking)
19. Computer (optional, for facilitator assistant note taking)
20. Power supply for computer

## FOCUS GROUP DAY OF PREPARATION

**Be sure to take care of the following logistics in advance of the focus group convening:**

1. Pick up or order food and beverages.
2. Arrive at the focus group venue at least 30 minutes in advance to set up room.
3. Arrange chairs for participants in a circle.
4. Set a table apart from the circle for the facilitator assistant for note taking.
5. Set a table apart from the circle for food and beverage.
6. Write up and hang a flip chart(s) with the title “Ground Rules” across the top, and the following basic rules (participants can add ground rules if they wish):
  - a. No right or wrong answers.
  - b. All ideas are good ideas.
  - c. Respect different points of view.
  - d. Say what you truly think.
  - e. Give everyone a chance to speak.
  - f. Don’t share if you aren’t comfortable.
  - g. No cell phones or recording devices.
7. Write up and hang a flip chart(s) with the title “Sources of Health Information” across the top, and rows with the words “peers, parents, teacher, school health educator, other adult, website, social media, television, brochures, posters, others?”
8. Hang flip charts at a location to visible to all focus group participants.

# FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE AND SCRIPT

[Facilitator may wish to cut and paste this portion of the guide into a separate document and resize the font style and size and/or adjust line spacing to enhance its readability as a script.]

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## WELCOME AND HOSPITALITY

- a. Facilitator and assistant welcome participants upon arrival.
- b. Facilitator invites participants to place their first name on a name badge sticker.
- c. Facilitator invites participants to grab a snack or beverage.
- d. Participants may either mingle with other participants or take a seat in the circle, according to their preference.

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## INTRODUCTIONS

- e. Facilitator introduces self by name, position, organization, and role as facilitator of the focus group and explains what “facilitator” means.
- f. Facilitator assistant introduces self by name, position, organization, and role as facilitator assistant.
- g. Facilitator invites participants to introduce themselves by first name. Acknowledge that some participants know each other and others do not.
- h. Participants introduce themselves by first name.

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## FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE

- i. Facilitator explains the project purpose and focus group purpose. *Suggested script:*

*The focus group we are conducting together today is part of our effort to increase adolescent and young adult men’s access to health services. And who better to help these organizations get it right than to “talk to the customer” ...guys like you. So, thank you, each of you, for joining us today. You are doing something important today.*

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## CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT

- j. Facilitator explains what is confidentiality and informed consent and assent. *Suggested script:*

*Before we begin our discussion, I want to emphasize that it is very important that we keep what we talk about today to ourselves. Do not share anything we talk about with people outside this room.*

During this discussion we will talk about sexuality. However, if during our conversation you mention that you are a victim of child abuse or neglect, or your child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, I need to notify the state child welfare agency.

I want you to promise to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the group discussion by repeating this confidentiality pledge I will read to you. Just repeat after me.

*"I understand that protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the other participants is very important. Therefore, I promise not to share the information discussed here today or the names of the participants with people outside the discussion group."*

- k. Facilitator explains the informed consent and informed assent forms. Suggested script:

*Also, the things you say during this focus group may be put in a summary of this discussion. There will be no way to identify who said what, and your names will not be included in a summary report. But we want to be extra sure you are cool with this. So we ask each of you to complete an informed consent form.*

- l. Facilitator assistant distributes informed consent and informed assent forms and pens. Suggested script:

*So let's take a moment so that each of you can read the form. You know it's important to read forms before you sign them, right? And if any of you have a question about what you're signing, give me a signal and I will speak to you about it.*

- m. Facilitator assistant collects forms.

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## NOTE TAKING AND RECORDING SESSION

- n. Facilitator explains that note taking and audiorecording will take place. Suggested script:

*All right, now that we have that important protection of your confidentiality addressed, let's talk about how we are going to make a record of this focus group.*

*We will be taking notes and will audiorecord the discussion so that we can accurately report the important information that you will be sharing with us. In an effort to keep this information confidential, just a few people will have access to the discussion recording. Also, your full name will not be attached to any comments you make here today.*

*Is this OK with everyone?*

*Because we are using a digital audiorecorder, please speak one at a time so that all opinions can be clearly heard.*

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## GROUND RULES

- o. Facilitator and participants sets ground rules for the focus group. Suggested script:

*Okay, one last step before we get into our discussion, and that's ground rules. I would like to review some basic guidelines that we should consider for the discussion. And also see if any of you have additional suggestions for ground rules. We have posted a starter set of ground rules on the flip chart. Let's take a look at those and see how those feel to you. Have we missed any rules that you want to put in place for our time together?*

1. *There are no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked today; all ideas are good ideas.*
2. *We also welcome and respect different points of view. Please answer what you truly think, regardless of the opinions of the other group members.*
3. *I want to hear the opinion of everyone in the room, and I may ask some questions directly to you. But if you are uncomfortable with a question, feel free to pass. You are under no obligation to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.*
4. *Please turn off all cell phones and other recording devices you might have with you.*

*Finally, during today's discussion, there are quite a few things to talk about; at times we may need to stop the discussion in order to move on. I apologize in advance for that.*

*But we are distributing note pads to you, 1) so that if you have something to share that we don't get time to cover, you can write it down; and 2) if you have something you want to share privately and not with the other participants, then you can write down those thoughts also. We will collect your pads at the end of the discussion; you shouldn't put your name on it.*

*Are there any questions at this point?*

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## QUESTIONS ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

[Asked of out-of-school focus groups only]

### **Suggested Script:**

*So, we are looking to figure out how guys like you learn about programs in your community and what keeps you participating in the services out there. Let me put a few questions out there.*

1. *How did you learn about this program?*
2. *What drew you into this program?*
3. *What keeps you interested in participating?*

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## QUESTIONS ON DEFINING HEALTH ISSUES OF AYA MEN

[Facilitator could use a flip chart and jot participant responses]

### **Suggested Script:**

*I want to hear about what “health” means to you, and what are some of the health concerns of guys your age.*

- 1. When you hear the words “health” or “healthy,” what images come to mind?*
- 2. What health issues do you think guys like you think about most?*
- 3. What health issues have you seen among your friends or peer group?*

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## QUESTIONS ON SOURCES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

### **Suggested Script:**

*Now we are going to think about where and from whom you get health information. We will call these “health information sources.”*

*And when I say “health information,” I mean answers to questions about health topics. They could be answers to questions about staying well or answers to questions about what to do if you think you are sick. When we are thinking about health information, we are including in that all types of health, including nutrition, exercise, sex, substance use, mental well-being.*

*So just keep that in mind as we consider these next questions.*

*You will see on that flip chart over there, I have listed some of the typical sources of health information. If there are other typical sources of health information that are not on the list, tell me now, and I will add them to it. We are going to learn more about out which of these sources you use the most by asking you to put dots/stickers next to your top two sources. So, okay, use two dots/stickers only. This is a good time to stretch also, or to grab more snacks or drinks.*

[Facilitator assistant passes out color coding labels to participants.]

[Participants color code their top two sources of information.]

[Facilitator assesses top ranked sources of health information.]

*Okay, now that we have a sense of your top sources of health information, let's think about each of them a bit more.*

- 1. How much do you trust the health information you get from that source?*
- 2. How much time do you spend with the source? For example, if you went to a website to find health information about any topic, let's just use acne as an*

- example, how much time do you think you would give to reading a web page or blog post about the topic?*
3. *Now, going back to the full list of sources of health information, which are your preferred methods of getting health information? [If Smartphone app is not mentioned, then prompt with it.]*
  4. *And tell me, if health information were available to you through a Smartphone app specifically tailored to guys like you, do you think you would use it? How important would a tool like this to be you?*
  5. *What health information would you like to access through a smartphone app?*

[Facilitator asks the following series of questions even if “parents” has not ranked high.]

**Suggested Script:**

*So, we really want to get a better handle on parents as a source of health information. We have a few questions specific to parents and others who play parent roles for you. And let me just add that “parent” means here today whomever you consider to play that role in your life (i.e., other family members or guardians).*

1. *Is there anything in particular you really wish parents would “get” when it comes to having conversations with guys like you about health?*
2. *Generally, do you think youth and parents are uncomfortable talking about sexual health? If so, who do you think is more uncomfortable—the youth or the parents?*
3. *What do you think would help lessen the discomfort?*

**Suggested Script:**

*Just a few more questions about your sources of health information.*

1. *If an adult you trusted—it could be a parent, or a school counselor, mentor, a coach, those types of people—if they offered to sit with you and have a focused conversation about your health, would you take them up on it?*
2. *About how much time would you be willing to have such a conversation take?*
3. *And let’s think a moment about getting health information in group settings, like in a classroom or as part of an afterschool life skills class, that sort of environment. If they were going to hold group discussions about health, would you feel more comfortable if those discussions were split between young men and young women, or would you prefer them to be all genders together?*
4. *Does it depend on the topic? And if so which topics?*
5. *Okay, now let’s see how familiar are you with the health services in your community? Do you know where to go for an annual health check-up? How about an HIV or STI (sexually transmitted infection) test?*
6. *If you don’t know where to go for sure, do you know how to find out?*
7. *Who or how might you go about finding out where to go?*

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## QUESTIONS ON THE AYA MALE WELL VISIT

### **Suggested Script:**

*We are going to switch topics now. Let's forget about where you get health information. We're now going to discuss health check-ups. They have all kinds of different names. Sometimes, you will hear them called "well visits." Other times it's "annual physical." We have settled on "health check-up."*

*Does everyone understand what I mean when I say "health check-up?" If not, raise your hand or speak up because I want to be sure to explain it better so that everyone knows what we are talking about.*

- 1. Is it important for guys your age to get a regular health check-up?*
- 2. What would motivate guys like you to get health check-ups?*
- 3. If any of you want to share with the group, or write notes on your note pad, about a health check-up that went really well, I'd like to hear about it.*
- 4. Or conversely, if any of you want to share with the group, or write notes on your note pad, about a health check-up that didn't go so well, you can share that, too.*

*Now let's consider for a bit the type of interaction you would want to have with the person who is providing the health check-up—it could be a doctor, or a nurse practitioner, or a health educator, or a social worker or someone else in that type role. We'll just simplify and call this person the "health care provider."*

*So what about a health care provider would make you most open to:*

- 5. honestly answer questions about your health behavior?*
- 6. discuss possible changes to your health behavior?*
- 7. act on suggested actions?*
- 8. have them perform a physical exam?*
- 9. come back to see them again?*

*Finally,*

- 10. What should guys your age be told about a well visit in advance of a check-up?*

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

### **Suggested Script:**

*All right, we are switching again. It wouldn't be a focus group with young people if we didn't talk a bit about sex, right? I have tried to keep these questions from getting too personal, but just to remember, if you don't feel like sharing your thoughts with the others, you can always decline to answer, or you can answer by jotting notes on your note pad.*

1. *What role, if any, do you have regarding preventing pregnancy?*
2. *What role, if any, do you have regarding preventing STIs and HIV?*
3. *Have you heard of HPV? What do you know about it?*
4. *What, if anything, do you know about the HPV vaccine?*
5. *Did you know that there is a vaccine especially for guys to prevent you from getting HPV?*
6. *What would motivate you to get a vaccine to prevent HPV?*

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## CONCLUSION AND HONORARIUM DISTRIBUTION

### **Suggested Script:**

*Wow, we're done! That was pretty hard work, huh? I can't thank you enough for sharing your thoughts about men's health with us.*

*Do any of you have any questions about today before you head off?*

*In appreciation of your time today, I am happy to present you a modest honorarium. Enjoy your gift card from [XXX].*

[Facilitator assistant distributes honoraria.]

*I can stick around a bit if any of you want to chat privately about the focus group experience. Otherwise, the focus group has concluded, and again, thanks, guys, for your help today.*