

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DISCUSSION FACILITATION GUIDE

Thank you for facilitating a conversation with members of your community about behavioral health. The feedback session you are leading will go a long way in guiding how state agencies can ensure that family members, caretakers and other community stakeholders have access to the resources they want and need to respond to behavioral health needs of BIPOC and LGTQ+ children throughout North Carolina. Your engagement will help ensure that community voices are at the core of future outreach strategies. As you prepare for your session, below is everything you need to know (and probably a little more) to have the best engagement session ever!

Before you dig in, we want to thank you again for being willing to engage with community members who trust you to help us build a more equitable North Carolina where everyone counts and has a fair opportunity to reach their full potential.

– *Stacey Carless, Executive Director NC Counts Coalition*

## Step 1 - Prepare for Your Engagement Session



**Get ready!** Please review this guide and resources to get an understanding of why we are doing this work. Once you have scheduled your event, be sure to let a member of NC Counts' regional team know so we can provide you with support. You must let your NC Counts regional director or manager know about your event before you begin any outreach so they can help ensure that your event fits within the requirements of your grant.

Review this facilitator guide, starting on page 4 to understand the who, what, when, where, and why of the session. Importantly, practice your script so that your meeting runs smoothly.

Need funding or other support? Speak with your regional team contact to let us know how we can help make your engagement session a success.

**Schedule your session:** Find a date, location, and time that you know your participants will find convenient. Be sure to let us know so we can provide our support. Here are a couple of tips to consider as you decide where and when you have your meeting:

- You may want to consider holding the session in a location that is convenient to the participants and accessible by several modes of public transportation, is physically accessible for all participants, and also has convenient parking. It may be helpful to serve refreshments (especially if the session is being held during mealtime).
  - ◆ *NC Counts has limited funds to support refreshments for your engagement sessions. Please contact your regional team member as soon as possible if you would like assistance with refreshments.*
- Make sure you have a notetaker. One person should lead the discussion, and another should record participants' responses. Read (and rehearse) your script: It's important to understand what you will say and how. Think through how you will engage with participants.

## Step 2 - Promote Your Engagement Session



Now that you have determined your engagement session's date, time, and location, spread the word. You will have the best sense of how to reach the community members in your network. Check out this [communications toolkit](#) to help your organization spread the word.

## Step 3 - Host Your Engagement Session

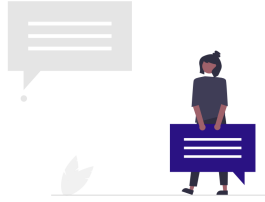


Now that you've spread the word and people are coming to your session, it's time to host an engaging meeting. Everything you need to successfully run a session, from sign-in sheets to activity materials, are in this document and the Toolkit. Sessions are designed to be a total of one hour and thirty minutes of content and discussion, and you may want to include additional time for participants to check-in and grab a refreshment before you begin, or additional time to sign-off on their participation at the end as

they collect their gift card. Your engagement session must include 3 components:

- 1) **Component 1 - Community Questionnaire:** The purpose of the questionnaire is to understand your participants' definition of behavioral health and their knowledge of resources available in their community.  
*Timing: 30-minutes to make an introduction, provide and collect survey responses*
- 2) **Component 2 - Education:** Provide information on the medical definition of behavioral health and findings of the impact of COVID-19 on children's behavioral health.  
*Timing: 30-minutes*
- 3) **Component 3 - Discussion:** Have a discussion to better understand what is important to your participants and determine how state agencies can make behavioral health resources available to their community.  
*Timing: 30-minutes*

## Step 4 - Submit Your Feedback to NC Counts Coalition



Congratulations on your engagement session! We are sure it was amazing. Submit your feedback through the reporting form which can be found at [this link](#) (or [bit.ly/3ITeMos](https://bit.ly/3ITeMos)). Make sure to submit a report for each engagement session you complete.

*intentionally left blank - move to next page*

## Facilitator Guide:

**Introduction:** The purpose of this listening session is to hear the voices of diverse community members within North Carolina. Participants will be asked to offer the perspective of their communities and will focus on knowledge, attitudes, and practices. No personal identifying information will be shared in any reports or publications. The aims of this activity are to:

- Gather information about the knowledge, perceptions and beliefs held by participants and their communities regarding behavioral health services for students K-12 (Kindergarten - 12th grade) who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more).
- Gather information about factors related to hesitancy and acceptance of receiving behavioral and mental health services within these communities, including myths and barriers.
- Identify effective and appropriate sources and channels that these communities trust and prefer for information.

Findings will be used to increase access to behavioral health services for children in grades K-12 who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more). Through outreach, we aim to develop a community-based approach to address behavioral health.

## Roles & Materials Needed:

- **Facilitator:** Guides the group through the discussion and keeps the group focused on the topics for discussion

→ **Notetaker:** Observes and does not interact with the group. The notes should include a summary of statements of what each person said and record when transitions occurred from one topic to the next.

The Notetaker should run the **audio recording device**. This could be a cell phone, computer, or other device that has an audio recording function. Make sure to test the sound quality prior to your event to ensure that you can clearly hear all communication that takes place during your event.

**Sample Size and Characteristics:** The goal for each organization is to engage 25-50 community members. These events will be held in person. Please use this guide to conduct discussions. It's important that you follow this facilitation guide during your event. Following this guide will ensure that we are receiving the best information possible. Please read this guide carefully. It will help you understand the goals of the community assessments and how you should go about engaging community members in a discussion about behavioral health.

**Safeguarding Participant Information:** Organizations hosting listening circles have an obligation to safeguard confidential and private information. Confidential and private information is any information that is personal and discrete in nature and related to listening circle participants. This includes personally identifiable information, which is information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other information. For example, a participant's full name, a participant's name and phone number, a participant's name and arrival date, etc. The following are steps to protect participant information:

1. Always be vigilant in keeping sensitive data secure and confidential;
2. Never share/discuss participants' sensitive data with others that are not permitted to view this information;
3. Never discuss participants' sensitive information in public or in an open space where others might overhear you;

4. Never leave your screen or open documents containing participant related sensitive data unattended;
5. Delete documents and files being stored on your computer and/or other devices when asked to do so;
6. Never leave printouts of sensitive data – ensure they are always physically secured (e.g. in a locked drawer, cabinet, desk). In fact, you should refrain from printing out sensitive data all together. If you must print out information, shred printouts after the task is complete;
7. Report privacy incidents to the regional staff as soon as they occur.

**Conducting the Engagement Session Discussion:** It is essential that participants feel they are being listened to with empathy. Similarly, if a participant becomes upset or frustrated during the session, the facilitator should provide reassurance or ask the participant if they would like to leave the listening circle discussion. Head's up: If the participant does not complete all three phases, they will not receive a gift card. The first few moments in the listening circle discussion are critical. In a brief time, the facilitator must create a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere, provide ground rules, and set the tone of the discussion. Much of the success of group interviewing can be attributed to the development of this open environment.

**Obtaining Consent:** At the beginning of the listening circle discussion, it is necessary for the facilitator to obtain informed verbal consent from participants. Informed consent is “permission granted in the knowledge of possible risks and benefits of participation.” Informed consent ensures participants have the information they need to decide to or not to participate in the listening circle discussion. To obtain informed verbal consent, the script below should be read aloud by the facilitator to all participants at the start of the listening circle discussion. If any individual does not agree to participate, thank them for their time and ask them to leave the session.

If any individual agrees to participate at the start of the listening circle discussion but decides to stop participating partway through, the facilitator should thank them for their time, then ask them if they agree with us using the responses that they have provided so far. If they agree,

thank them for their time and continue with the listening circle discussion once they have left the session. If they do not agree, it is essential that the notetaker writes the individual's first name (do not write down their full name) in the "Additional notes" section at the end of the Note Taking Template, and notes that they left the discussion early and do not agree to having their responses used. The notetaker must then remove that individual's responses from their notes immediately after the listening circle discussion.

### **Tips and Guidance for Conducting a Engagement Session:**

- Once the facilitator has started the session additional participants should not join as it can interrupt the discussion.
- Check for questions or concerns before you start.
- Use 5-second pauses to allow people to speak.
- Use open-ended questions and avoid "yes" "no" questions
- Ask follow-up questions and use probes: "Would you explain further, or Could you give an example?"
- When speaking with participants, confirm your understanding of their statement, and ask if the participant or group agrees.
  - ◆ *You may be able to confirm your understanding by phrasing the same question in a different way.*
- Ask if anyone else has any comments on that question
- Look around the room, and make brief eye contact, especially with those who may not have spoken
- Remain as neutral or impartial as possible, even if you have a strong opinion about something
- Keep the conversation going



## SCRIPT

**[Introduction] [READ ALOUD]:** Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I will be guiding the discussion today. This is \_\_\_\_\_ who will be taking notes on what we discuss here today so we can make sure to capture your feedback.

We are talking to you today because we would like to understand what is important to you when talking about behavioral health for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) students. We are going to give you a questionnaire, provide information on the medical definition of behavioral health and have a discussion to better understand what is important to you and determine how state agencies can make behavioral health resources available to your community. There are no right or wrong answers. The things we learn from you will be important to inform North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services regarding how they can make information and resources about behavioral health available to you, your friends, family, and others in your community to support BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) students.

Your participation today is voluntary, meaning that you are answering these questions because you want to, not because you have to. If you prefer not to answer a question, that is okay. You can also leave the discussion at any time.

We are recording this discussion so we can take notes and not miss anything that is said. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside of our team, and it will be deleted after the notetaker confirms their notes are correct. However, we will be keeping the transcript of the recording and the notes taken by the notetaker. Your personally identifiable information will not be included anywhere in the transcript or notes. Notes and transcripts will be shared with our team.

We may share the aggregate data, or the general information that we learn, with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and publicly so that others may learn from this discussion. This may include publishing the results externally. If you agree to participate in this discussion, we will be using your demographic information in our analysis and reports, including your gender, age, location and race/ethnicity. This will help us to understand trends and differences in responses. No names or personally identifiable information will be shared in reports or publications.

**[Ice Breaker]** Ask the participants how they engage with K-12 students - i.e., is the participant a teacher, a parent, an after school counselor, etc?

**[Introduce Community Questionnaire]** *Explain the purpose of the questionnaire and provide participants with an option to complete a paper copy or through their phone using the QR code. [READ ALOUD]* The purpose of the questionnaire I have just passed out is to understand your definition of behavioral health and your knowledge of resources available in your community.

*Once participants have completed the questionnaire, collect the paper copies and confirm electronic submission by asking participants to share the thank you page with the host before closing out the electronic submission. If someone has a question while completing the questionnaire they can ask the facilitator for assistance.*

**[Introduce Education Portion]** *Share educational materials with participants.*

- ★ Please find the [educational materials](#) located on the [NC Counts website](#), in both English and Spanish.

*You may want to offer a stretch/bathroom break after this portion of the presentation.*

**[Discussion]** **[READ ALOUD]** We are asking everyone here to please keep what others share private so that everyone can talk openly and honestly. Also, we want you to ask

questions or let us know if you do not understand something, or if something that we said is bothering you in any way.

I want to highlight three key points again.

1. Your name and personally identifiable information will not be shared in any reports.
2. Your participation in this interview is voluntary.
3. You can stop answering questions or leave at any time.

Before we get started, I'd like to go over our ground rules for tonight's discussion:

- Only one person should talk at a time.
- "What is shared in the room should stay in the room."
- Share the floor - it is important for us to hear everyone's ideas and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers to questions – just ideas, experiences and opinions, which are all valuable.
- It is important for us to hear all sides of an issue – both the positive and the negative
- It's okay to disagree; please do so respectfully.
- If anyone has any specific questions that do not relate to the discussion, there will be an opportunity at the end of the meeting.

**[Ask for Informed Consent] [READ ALOUD]**

1. Do you understand, and do you agree to participate? If you do not agree, please leave the room. *(Make sure you obtain consent from all participants)*
2. Do you agree to have this interview recorded? The data from the recordings will be anonymous. If you don't agree, please leave the room. *(Make sure you obtain consent from all participants to be recorded)*

**[Introduce Engagement Session Discussion Questions] [READ ALOUD]** We will now begin recording. **NOTETAKER to begin recording here.** I want to ask you to think about behavioral health and the youth you engage with in kindergarten to twelfth grade.

1. What is important to you about behavioral health? What do you want us to know?
2. Would you like more information about behavioral health?
  - a. If they say no: Why or Why not?
  - b. If they say yes: What type of information would you like?
    - i. How would you like to receive that information? (NOTE: We would like to know how they would like to receive information, such as via text, through the school, etc. **You should not make these suggestions but use this as guidance as you collect feedback**).
3. If you were to notice that a child's behavior has changed, and that change could have a negative effect on that child's life, who would you feel comfortable speaking with for help?
4. How did you see the COVID-19 pandemic affect the behavior of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ children in your family or in your community?

**[Closing Script]** We've done a lot today! Thank you so much for your honesty and engagement. As we come to a close, I want to ask you a final question as a group:

→ What is the best way to keep you informed about our work moving forward?

This concludes today's listening circle. Thank you again for participating in our discussion. We know that your time and ideas are valuable and would like to give each of you \$75 for your full participation in the 3 segments we covered today. You will receive your gift card as you leave the room, you will need to sign confirming you received your gift card. Thank you for coming and enjoy the rest of your day.