

Family Focus Group Protocol

Tool

This protocol is a starting point for planning and facilitating structured family conversations that teams can tailor to the needs and context of their community. It is designed to gather honest input to inform compliance system reviews and large-scale improvement efforts. As teams prepare to lead the conversation, they should consider the goals, who will facilitate and take notes, and how to handle logistics like recruitment, language access, and scheduling. The topics below provide a framework for the conversation, with guidance on what each area is intended to surface.

Topic	Time	Guidance
Opening the Session	10 Minutes	Welcome participants and introduce the purpose of the focus group. Share how the information gathered will be used and clarify that there are no right or wrong answers. Review norms for the conversation and address any questions about confidentiality.
Defining the Purpose	10 Minutes	Share the goals of the focus group with participants and explain how the information gathered will be used. Clarify the role family input plays in the compliance review process and address any questions before the conversation begins.
Gathering Insight	30 Minutes	Use open-ended questions to guide the discussion. Questions should invite families to reflect on their experiences with the IEP process, communication with the school or district, and how supported they feel as partners in their child's education.
Closing and Feedback	5 Minutes	Thank participants for their time and input. Share next steps and how families can follow up if they have additional thoughts after the session.

