

Consent Form for Participants in an Accountability Focus Group

Purpose

You received an invitation to participate in a focus group sponsored by the Accountability Workgroup of the Fairfax County Council to End Domestic Violence (CEDV). The purpose of this focus group is to learn about your experiences, and to receive your suggestions for how our community may better improve supports and safety for survivors while promoting accountability in those who cause harm through domestic violence.

Procedure

As part of this focus group, you will be assigned a place in a group of 3 – 10 persons who have also experienced domestic violence, might have interacted with systems and programs that promote accountability, and who identify as the same gender as you do. One person will be assigned to take written notes electronically or on paper about whatever the participants say about their experiences. However, confidentiality will be maintained for whatever is said, and the names and other identifying information shall not be included in the final form. If you choose to participate in the focus group, you are allowed to stop participating at any moment you choose during the conversation. There are no correct and incorrect responses to the questions in the focus group. CEDV wants to hear different points of view and would like everyone to share their opinions. Out of respect, please do not interrupt others, but feel free to express yourself openly, including if you have had a different experience than other members of the group. We will not ask you to share any information about your personal situation, and the moderator might interrupt you or other participants in the group to maintain confidentiality of personal information.

This focus group is not offered as a counseling service for participants. If you are seeking a support group or group counseling or any other services, these are available to you through providers in the community. The 24-hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline (703-360-7273) can help you access a range of services.

Benefits and Risks

Your participation could be useful to you and other people who have been impacted by domestic violence.

Although none of the questions asked in the focus group specifically prompt participants to detail any painful experiences, you may experience painful reminders of trauma you or your loved ones might have experienced. A trained professional will be available during each focus group to provide assistance if you experience distress and want support, and you may stop or pause at any time and excuse yourself from any part of the conversation that you find uncomfortable. If you know that you experience severe reactions to trauma reminders, we recommend you do not participate in this focus group. As a condition of participating in the focus group, you agree not to communicate to anyone outside of the focus group any personal information you hear in the focus group. However, it is possible that another participant could violate this agreement and disclose your information. You may limit your risk by sharing only the details about your situation that you consider safe to divulge.

Confidentiality

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of the other members of the focus group and not to divulge anything that is said in the group. Members of CEDV will analyze the data, but, as previously stated, your responses will be kept confidential and will not include names in any participant. All the staff and volunteers who participate in any way in this focus group will sign a document in which they promise to respect the confidentiality of all information from the participants.

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Contact

If you have any questions or concerns about the focus group, please contact:

Name at Number (you may leave a voice message or send a text message) or by email at Email and include “**focus group**” in the subject line.

I understand this information and fully agree to participate according to the conditions indicated above.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a focus group. Staff and volunteers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the information, but the nature of the focus groups makes it impossible for staff to guarantee confidentiality. Moderators will remind participants to respect the privacy of the other participants and not to repeat to others what is said in the focus group. Also, they will ask all participants to sign the following statement, in which they agree to respect the confidentiality of all participants.

Agreement

I, _____, agree to maintain the confidentiality of all the information that each and every participant mentions during the focus group session.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name	Signature	Date

Note: If you do not agree to the statement above, please do not sign this section. If you prefer, you may still participate in a written survey or interview survey, instead.