

**Ohio's SPF-PFS Initiative**  
**Collecting and Using Demographic Data with Focus Groups/Listening Sessions/Group Interviews**  
**Guidance Document**

At the request of SPF-PFS Project Directors, Ohio's SPF-PFS Evaluation Team (OSET) is providing two demographic collection worksheets (one for adults and one for youth) for optional use when conducting focus groups/listening sessions/group interviews.

The following are important considerations to keep in mind if your coalition/group elects to collect demographic information from participants:

1. **Confidentiality:** As stated in the consent documents, all participants in the focus groups are entitled to confidentiality. The consent form serves as a kind of non-binding contract between the participant and the person conducting the focus group. In the form, we promised that we would not release any individual's information, and it is important that no one's demographic information be released as well.
2. **Report in aggregate:** in keeping with the above, the consent form also states that information will be reported in aggregate. To ensure that no one's demographic information is shared at the individual level, it is important to remember that if you decide to collect this information, you report it as an average or range only. This way, no one participant could be identified from the demographic information we collect.
3. **Non-requirement:** Just as participation in the focus group was voluntary, we recommend that filling out the complete demographic questionnaire also be a non-requirement. We have included instructions for filling out the sheet that explicitly state that no one person's information will be reported.
4. **Be Smart!** In keeping with the above, you must use your best judgement when reporting. For example, if we only have one focus group participant who marks 'Native Hawaiian' as their race and we report that one member of the focus group was Native Hawaiian in a very small community, the identify of that person becomes compromised. Rather, we can report something like, "the majority of our focus group was White." Similarly, with the first question, we should be wary of reporting transgender or gender non-conforming individuals. We can instead say something like "76% of our participants were female."

The most important thing to keep in mind is to not report this information in any way that an individual participant could be identified. As mentioned in the human subject's protection webinar, privacy and confidentiality of our participants should be top priority!