

**Dallas County  
Community Assessment:**

**Focus Group Report**

**Prepared for:  
Dallas Women's Foundation**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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At the request of the Dallas Women's Foundation (DWF), the Survey Research Center (SRC) undertook a multi-faceted study of the status of women and girls in Dallas County. One component of that study was completed through the use of focus groups. This report details the development of those focus groups and the information garnered from them. This report can be a tool, enabling the DWF to effectively target its energies and its funding.

## METHODOLOGY

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During October and November of 2002, ten focus groups were conducted on behalf of the Dallas Women's Foundation (see Appendix A for a description of the groups). The purpose of the focus groups was to discuss issues facing women in Dallas County. The organization and administrative structure for the focus groups was based on prevailing focus group standards and methodology, as outlined in the SRC's proposal for the study.

Participants were recruited in a variety of ways. First, target populations for the focus groups were identified. Target populations from which focus group participants were to be drawn were selected through consultation between the SRC and DWF staff members. A number of factors went into the identification of the targeted groups, including the identification of groups that might be missed in the other components of the study (i.e., the telephone and mail surveys). The agreed upon target groups included:

- Teen mothers
- Homeless women
- Homeless women with children
- Drug and/or alcohol abusers
- Women below the poverty level
- Abused women
- Women with mental illness
- Executive/business women
- Lesbian women
- Grandparents raising grandchildren.

After the target populations were identified, the SRC recruited focus group participants from the target group or from individuals who are familiar with the needs of the target population. The DWF identified a series of agencies, categorized into eight areas, from which focus group participants were also drawn. None of the participants were compensated for their participation.

There is no agreed upon optimum size for focus groups, but the general rule is that a group should be between 6-12 members. Group size for these focus groups ranged from thirteen to five. There were eighty-five participants overall. A list of the focus group target populations, locations, dates, size, and racial composition is attached as Appendix A. The research is qualitative and exploratory in nature, therefore, samples were not chosen for statistical validity, but to ensure a diverse cross-section of participants.

Upon arrival at the focus group facility, participants were presented with a written notice of consent form (see Appendix D). The notice of consent informed potential participants that the session would be audio taped and of the need to sign the consent agreement before participating in the session. The form was explained to and read by each participant. All signed consent agreements were submitted to the Survey Research Center on December 20, 2002.

Focus group discussions were conducted in English. Participants were referred to by first name only to ensure confidentiality. Each session was between 1 hour and thirty minutes and two hours in duration. A script prepared cooperatively by the staff of the SRC and Samantha Durst was used to guide each session (see Appendix B). A discussion guide was developed that included the basic questions used to guide group interaction (see Appendix C). Each group session began with brief introductions from each participant.

Samantha Durst facilitated each of the ten sessions. She has attempted to write a fair and accurate report of what was observed and discussed in each session. Actual respondent verbatim responses accompany most, if not all, points made in the report. Highlights of individual sessions are presented below. Respondent quotations are italicized. Author clarifications of verbatim comments appear in brackets. The text under the section heading for individual focus group is a summary of group comments and is not the opinion of the author.

As outlined in the SRC's proposal, in focus group research, it is the group, not the individual, that is the unit of analysis. The discussion questions and topic were used as the organizing format for the analysis. An assessment was made of group responses to all the questions addressed in the meeting. For example, if one of the questions posed asked about access to healthcare, the data would be examined in order to arrive at what the individual group conclusions were and then group-by-group comparisons were made.

## FINDINGS

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There are unique issues facing women in Dallas County today. There was a great deal of diversity in the composition and backgrounds of the women participating in the ten focus groups. Given the diversity of the groups, the extent to which similar themes and phrases are repeated in multiple focus groups is somewhat surprising. Money, employment, health care, and child care are issues of critical importance to these women.

All of the groups expressed the desire for more information that could be used to improve their circumstances. Several of the groups suggest a need for a centralized source of information for women on a variety of topics, from jobs to health care. Access to information was viewed as a workable, cost-effective solution to the problems manifest in the participants' varied situations. All of the groups were discontent over the lack of respect given to them by assistance providers, be those providers public or non-profit sector employees. All were concerned about rising medical costs.

### Group 1 (Grandparents Raising Grandchildren)

This session was held at the Dallas Urban League, which sponsors a grandparent's support group for grandparents raising grandchildren. The six women in the group were raising their grandchildren for a variety of reasons; the most frequent reason mentioned was drug addition/abuse by their children.

As a whole this group was very concerned about the cost of raising grandchildren. All were of retirement age and had concerns about being able to provide their grandchildren with the *little extras that make childhood nice*. Many expressed concern that "the system" sometimes worked against their interest. They felt the lack of support from public agencies creates a lot of financial problems for them and others in this target group.

*Raising grandchildren is hard work. The system does not make it easy to care for grandkids. I was turned down [for public assistance] many times. It shouldn't matter how much I make.*

*Extra things, like a bag of chips for a party or other treats, can be hard to afford.*

*The lack of money can help you teach the kids the importance of saving, but you have to have something to save...*

Transportation is also a concern for these women. About one half of the group used their own vehicles for transportation. The other half used public transportation. The cost of caring for a car and having insurance for it was a concern. All were concerned about driving at night and the ability to get their grandchildren to evening school functions.

As is the case with society as a whole, this group had strong feelings about the cost and availability of health care. Getting a Medicaid or Medicare card was viewed as a key to successfully obtaining healthcare for themselves and their grandchildren. They noted, however, that neither Medicaid nor Medicare cover all expenses.

*Medicare and Medicaid are just Band-Aids. Not everything is covered. The cost is overwhelming. I had to pay for my granddaughter's doctor's visits for more than a year before she was covered. The cost was overwhelming and she's a healthy girl. What do you do if they need glasses or the dentist?*

*The AARP insurance is good, but my grandchild is not on it.*

*Co-payments have gone up. That's an issue. A specialist costs [in co-payments] thirty dollars or more.*

Government institutions, and their employees, received mixed reviews from these grandparents. They were particularly frustrated by the length of time it takes to complete paperwork and receive the benefits of that paperwork and the disrespectful attitude of many government employees. The programs, like food stamps or Medicaid, were viewed as beneficial.

*When I got my granddaughter, her mother had been on assistance, but I could not get that for a long time. Child Protective Services didn't take her, so I had a hard time getting the benefits transferred. She [the mother] basically abandoned her, so I went and got her [the grandchild]. Now she lives with me for four years. Everything my granddaughter has I had to fight for. Whatever benefit she had with her mom she should have had with us. The benefits were for her, not for us...*

*The paperwork and the wait for it to be processed can be hard. You can starve while you're waiting.*

*The system can be hard to understand.*

*The system doesn't care about you. I was over the guidelines by one dollar [her income was over the eligibility limit by one dollar], so my granddaughter didn't get food stamps. The food was for her! Why did my income matter? If I had let her go into the foster care system she would be getting all that stuff. Because I cared enough to keep her, now she doesn't get it. It doesn't make sense.*

*You never get enough to cover all their expenses, but every little bit helps.*

*The people who work for government act like you're asking for their [own] money. I wouldn't ask if I didn't need the help. You have to go to their office several times and it takes all day to get their and back.*

*Paying your bills is a problem if you ain't got no help. There are a lot of grandparents who are struggling financially. You're struggling to pay the utilities and buy cloths. It's a job. Not only financially, it's a stressful job.*

Childcare can be a concern, but it is less an issue once the children start school. All of these grandparents were raising school-aged grandchildren. Getting the children to their various school activities was a concern. They discussed the struggle they feel with raising someone else's children.

*There's a difference between how you raise your own kids and how my children want their child raised. What can you do? I have to raise them my way. People today think you can't spank or discipline kids. Sometimes that's necessary.*

*The biggest challenge is keeping my grandkids away from drugs and out of trouble.*

*I can't let them go to these different functions with just anybody. Sometimes I'm just too tired to take them somewhere else, but there's no one to take them. You can't trust just anybody. What would really be helpful is a mentor program. My grandchild needs an adult who's younger to be with. Maybe that person could take them places, like a big sister. They love younger adults. They can be a mother figure to her.*

There is social support available to these grandparents, like the grandparents support program offered at the Dallas Urban League. However, raising grandkids is a big job, and more support is needed. *These children's parents need to take more responsibility, but how do you make that happen. Family support from them is not there.*

Overall, these women would like to see more funds made available for helping grandparents meet the costs of raising their grandchildren. They believed grandparents would also benefit from other, younger adults interacting with their grandkids, and streamlined procedures for enrolling their grandchildren in public assistance programs.

## **Group 2 (Lesbian Women):**

This group of thirteen women met through various programs at the Cathedral of Hope, a Christian community welcoming to gays and lesbians. These women had extensive views on many of the issues discussed in the course of the focus group. They were very forthcoming with their views and eager to assist the Dallas Women's Foundation.

Employment and financial concerns were important to Group 2. Several felt that Lesbians are subject to workplace discrimination. In general, they felt that women do not have pay parity with men. In addition, because lesbian couples do not typically have legal standing they can be denied health care benefits that would be available to heterosexual couples in the workplace. Another complicating financial factor for Lesbian couples can result when the couple separates.

*Money is power.*

*Lesbians can easily be fired.*

*I have many friends who were in a relationship that has broken up and they are in financial straits now. This happens a lot. Maybe one of them took on the homemaker role and when the relationship breaks up...when they divorce... that person doesn't have a job or any experience. They don't have the education they need to support themselves or their family on that single income. It's working poverty. Many lesbians are not educated about financial issues. More financial counseling is needed for women.*

*Given the economy, younger girls may have difficulty finding any job at all. Especially if you have a shaved head and you're a lesbian or people think you're a lesbian.*

*Aging lesbians many times don't have family to turn to in times of financial difficulty or as they age. They have to be independent.*

*There needs to be more education about self-employment. That can create a lot of freedom.*

*The business community in Dallas is male dominated. Women still have to work harder than the guys. You still have to get past the glass ceiling. It is much worse here than in the state I moved from. We say everything is equal and everything is ok, but it's not.*

*I might add that it is white male dominated.*

*The downturn in the stock market did not affect me or anyone I know. But what I did see was the trickle-down effect. My friend who cleans houses lost her job because the family doesn't have the money to pay her anymore. Hours get cut back in other jobs. Things like that.*

*If you haven't been financially wise, you have to have a job particularly as you age. I haven't known of resources in Dallas for this.*

Health care issues can be complex for lesbians. Many times lesbians are denied the opportunity to be covered by their partner's health care programs. The group was dissatisfied with the level of medical research being done on women's health issues and issues of importance to lesbians.

*A women's clinic is really needed. Something like the Resource Center of Dallas. Lack of money is the problem. How do you get the money for something like that? That's really what women in Dallas need.*

*People don't or can't carry insurance because of the cost of the coverage and the cost of the co-payments.*

*COBRA doesn't cover domestic partners, so that leaves us out. Even if you could afford COBRA.*

*Some doctors don't even take insurance because they don't want to deal with it.*

*There is one good thing for families out there.*

*If you don't have a job, you don't have insurance. If you don't have insurance, you go to work sick. You used to be able to count on having a job or getting help from the church or a government institution. Not anymore. Now, it's more fragile.*

*I work at a doctor's office. The other day I started looking at the brochures on health in the office. There were nine of them. The only four brochures on women were all on breast cancer. Something's missing.*

*Medical care is available, but it's not affordable. Money changes the quality of care you get. Health care should be a right not a privilege. In some zip codes in Dallas, good health care is not available.*

*The cost of prescriptions is awful.*

The interaction these women have had with government institutions has been both positive and negative. It is common for lesbians to have interaction with government institutions, but being a lesbian can make that interaction more complex.

*There is no consistency between judges. A judge can bring financial or emotional ruin. Judge can decide that you can't keep your own kids. Judges can decide that your lifestyle is unacceptable.*

*There's an underground network that helps gays who are seeking to adopt. It can steer you toward better judges.*

*Lesbians can have trouble working for the government. I used to be in the military. If you're gay, you're out. Now I'm in law enforcement. It is very male dominated. Gays and lesbians are still pushed out.*

*My parents placed me in a state mental institution for being lesbian. They made me say I wasn't in order to get out. The institution has happy to take me because they got a lot of insurance money from my parents.*

*There's a lot of discrimination against gays and lesbians in public schools. The pressure on gay and lesbian students can be bad, from teachers as well as from other students. It's really sexual harassment. Lesbians and gays are still threatened in public schools.*

Some lesbians feel that they cannot place their children in traditional childcare situations for fear of discrimination against their children. Caring for their children in a discrimination free environment is critical.

*Christian schools can be some of the worst.*

*It's similar to health care; you get what you can pay for.*

*Women who get assistance to pay for their child care may not get care that is as good. Affordability of childcare is an issue, whether you're a lesbian or not.*

*Being lesbian and having kids creates a conflict issue among lesbians. When I was young and had kids I was called "a breeder" [a derogatory term].*

*The child of one of my friends sat for hours in a dirty diaper because "the other kids needed attention first." That was discrimination. They won't come out and say it's because she pays less than the other parents, but that's part of it.*

*I've had friends who have quit teaching because the cost of child care is more than their salary. Why work?*

Lesbians and their children face a number of social issues. Their children might be outcasts. The secrecy in which some live can create social issues. Extended families can make a big difference.

*Again, good child care should be a right, not a privilege.*

*For boy children, lesbian parents can be a source of pain because of the name calling.*

*I have been in relationships where my partner did not want her children to know.*

*Coming out to our parents impacts all of us, no matter what our age.*

*Your extended family or tribal family can make such a difference here.*

*Parents/Moms don't want their kids to be hurt. Kids can be hurt if they lose friends over their mom being a lesbian. If someone comes to my house several times, I'll come out to them and say, "It's not an issue for your kids." But for some people it is an issue. My kids have lost friends over it.*

*I do think women use social support more than men do.*

One area of concern unique to this group was battered lesbians. Lesbians, like other women can be in abusive situations. *No one wants to talk about battered lesbians.* Trans-gendered women are another divisive issue. *Trans-gendered women are at the bottom of everyone one of the issues we've talked about this evening—economic, social, employment, and healthcare.*

In conclusion, these women agreed they would like to see funds and interest given to developing a resource center that included a health clinic to address women and lesbian concerns. They did not feel that these concerns are met adequately in Dallas at present.

### **Group 3 (Homeless Women with Children):**

All thirteen of these homeless women have young children being cared for at the Vogel Alcove while they are at school, looking for work, or at work. This focus group was held during one of their parenting sessions. All of these women felt they had been directly affected by the recent downturn in the economy.

*Getting a job is hard. There have been a lot of layoffs since 9-11. They want you to have a degree.*

*A degree may not be needed to get a job, but many times a job would like for you to be bi-lingual.*

*Having to travel on the bus makes getting and having a job ore difficult. You have to get the kids to daycare or school and still get to the interview on time [in the morning]. That's hard with public transportation. The bus is late; it breaks down.*

*The hours of the job aren't the same as the hours for school or childcare or transportation. What are you supposed to do?*

*You have to find a job that is close to the school or childcare, so that you can get back and forth. You just can't go anywhere for a job.*

*I have a criminal background. That makes it hard for me to get a job. They screen for a criminal backgrounds; even if it's not related to the job.*

Healthcare was extremely desirable for this group. As was the case with Group 1, they had had negative experiences with the application processes for health care coverage.

*If you have Medicaid, health care is less of an issue.*

*Medicaid can help, but not everyone or everything is covered. Different programs are covered.*

*The quality of the care you get varies from clinic to clinic or doctor.*

*The delay before benefits kick in can hurt you and be costly. What are you supposed to do?*

*You don't really get personal care in a public clinic or a public hospital.*

*It's difficult to get a referral and some doctors won't take Medicare. A lot of times you don't go or get care.*

*The nurses and doctors act differently if you have a Medicare card. You have to sit the office all day. The other patients go first. They talk to you like you're a child.*

*The cost of prescriptions is too much. Some cost \$30. Who has \$30 for a prescription? What do you do then? You see the doctor, but you can't get the medicine.*

*You may have to wait all day to get care at Parkland and still have to go somewhere else to get care. The end of the day comes and you still haven't been seen. Stewpot has a medi-van. Sometimes you can get care that way.*

*I waited all day long for 3 days to get care at Parkland. They just kept telling me to come back the next day...*

*It's not that it's [Medicaid] a government program. It's the people—the doctors, the nurses, the receptionists—they act like they don't care. IT may be they get paid less with Medicaid.*

*If you don't have legal status [legal immigration status] you can't get Medicaid. You have more fear. You're not going to get medical care. Your legal status makes it harder to get jobs or see a doctor.*

Government institutions were generally viewed as unresponsive to their needs. When, and if, it comes, government aid is helpful.

*The WIC office is slow.*

*All government programs are slow.*

*There's always a lot of paperwork. They want you to give up. They think it's their money you're trying to get. They feel like they own the assistance.*

*Every time I go to Human Services I get nervous and frustrated. The Lone Star card is helpful.*

*Each caseworker does the paperwork differently. Some are helpful, some are not.*

*I tried t get emergency food stamps when both my husband and I lost our jobs, but we didn't qualify. How could we not qualify?*

*How do you get information about these programs?*

*Each office does it [the paperwork] differently. Some are more generous.*

These homeless women with children had several suggestions for what could be done to improve their situation. Among their suggestions were: no funding cuts for TANF or food stamps; lengthening the eligibility for public assistance programs; making affordable housing for homeless people a priority; and increasing the accountability for polite behavior among government employees.

#### **Group 4 (Drug and Alcohol Abusers/Women in Recovery):**

This focus group session was held at the Nexus Recovery Center for drug and alcohol abuse. Getting and holding a job was a concern for the twelve women in this group. Their concerns had multiple aspects, including the effect of a criminal background of getting a job to wage levels.

*Can the job support all of my expenses: my car, childcare, rent. If you don't have special skills a good job is hard to find.*

*Having a criminal background makes it harder.*

*The cutoff on income levels for Medicaid is too low. Small jobs or raises can cause you to get cutoff.*

*Child care costs make working less financially appealing. I have a disabled child. It's hard to find child care for her. The whole "stay at home Mom thing" is not respected.*

*Getting a job is harder because we're in recovery. I missed worked before I was in recovery. I have a felony and that limits options. Little jobs don't pay enough. More employers need to give us a chance.*

*Getting housing can always be an issue. I have a curfew because I'm in recovery. How do I find a job and housing that allows for that? What if I find a job but the hours are wrong? What do I do?*

*There's a penalty for being honest about your history. But I don't want to lie about it. Telling the truth is part of my recovery.*

The cost of health care and prescriptions is a barrier for these women getting health care for themselves and their children. The system is difficult for them to work with. Some women here believed that they should be eligible for Medicaid, but did not know how to apply for it. Some of the women believed they are not treated respectfully by medical personnel because of their backgrounds. Some of the participants had a high level of knowledge about available public assistance programs (Medicaid, Medicare, CHIPS, public housing, etc.), others had very little knowledge. Those without knowledge felt strongly they needed a better, more organized way to get information.

*I was at Parkland last week and they gave me a prescription, but I could not get it filled. That prescription was \$56 bucks and they said you had to pay for it now. I didn't have \$56 bucks. They wouldn't bill me.*

*A lot of people won't even go to the hospital.*

*I'm happy with Medicaid. It helps. Some doctors won't take it.*

*I can't qualify for public assistance because my husband makes too much money, but we're not together any more.*

*Medicaid has a poor selection of doctors. We're not treated well because we are "not paying." Poor quality doctors sometimes make the wrong diagnosis. Medicaid doesn't make it easy to have a personal doctor. The doctors are in a rush.*

*The stigma of recovery may lead to not being treated. When one doctor at Parkland saw my tracks, he refused to treat me. Addicts and kids with special needs have trouble getting good medical care. You're treated like less than a person if you are honest with the doctor.*

*We need information about how to get help and what programs are out there. Someone should come here to explain it to us.*

*People don't know about the options.*

They felt public housing should be more available. *Section 8 housing is not always available. We need a way for women to get information about public housing.* Several women exchanged information about where to go to try and get public housing during the session. It was clearly a strong interest for theirs.

The interaction these women had had with government institutions was mixed. Some had had very positive experiences with government. Other had not. Generally, they believed that there should be more effort made to enforce child support payment orders and to ensure that police officers are respectful to women.

*Police officers are abusive physically to women. The police system can be a nightmare. How do you do something about it? Where do you go for help?*

*The cop I dealt with was prejudiced.*

*The Dallas police department is not good. They don't care about your health or how you're doing. They do not listen to inmates. Just for asking for my rights I was put down. It's disheartening.*

Most of these women had children. They expressed disappointment with the availability and quality of child care in Dallas County.

*There's not enough child care.*

*It costs too much. I pay \$125 per week for my one child. He's one and one half years old. The costs range by age, location and program. Cheaper child care doesn't follow regulations.*

*Disabled children cost more. I have three kids. Two cost \$250 per week each. For my disabled child it's \$280 per week for 20 hours.*

*CCMS (Child Care Management System) won't help you if you make \$7 or more per hour. And you have to be working or in school. That's not a realistic guideline. The child care can be taken away if you don't follow the guidelines.*

*The conditions at some day care centers are deplorable. They are not being safe. The teachers aren't even trained sometimes.*

Women in Group 4 agreed they need and most receive social support of one form or another. Most thought women seek more support than men. *Without social support women stay in bad relationships longer.*

Overall, these women sought more information about ways in which they could improve their chances of long term recovery and the status of their children. They would like to see more efforts made to educate women about resources available from public and private organizations. *We need a hub we can go to for all kinds of information and we need a way to know the hub exists.* They suggested information be given to police officers to distribute as needed. In addition, they thought a group could be formed to go out to various places like Nexus to give information to women.

## **Group 5 (Women at 200% of Poverty):**

*Everyone in this group was concerned about employment and maintaining the income it generated. The need for a living wage, one at which you can live on, discussed. In their view the economy was declining, making it harder to get or keep a job.*

*I work at the Wilkerson Center. People come in there every day looking for emergency shelter. There is an increasing level of homelessness in Dallas over the last two months.*

*Older women are losing their jobs. They don't have any place to go. The medical costs are hard for them to recover from.*

*For the younger women, from 18-39, they have children, they need a job. When they get a job it's minimum wage. It takes three jobs to get by. One job to pay for the bills, one job to pay for housing, and one to pay for your automobile.*

*The minimum wage needs to be increased. There needs to be more cost of living increases.*

*You can't give the shelter's address out to employers. They don't like it. You have to hide where you live [for fear of discrimination]. They are not going to hire you if you are at a shelter. There are no bathing facilities.*

*Not everyone knows about places to get help. There are centers and churches to get help. They don't know who to call or what to ask for.*

*Sometime the people with resources don't want to help you. People are rude. They forget that this can happen to anyone. Society has no compassion. I've sat behind a desk, too.*

*Referrals for help come from other agencies. It feels like a big circle. You have to call for referrals, but sometimes you don't have \$0.50 for phone calls. Just handing out phone numbers [for referrals] is not enough. You should be able to use a 1-800 number to call any agency in Dallas County. I know that would be expensive, but that would help people.*

*People at these agencies have heard it all. It's like working in a complaint bureau. You'd think they could differentiate between who's sincere and who's not. You have to have an advocate.*

Transportation was an issue without an easy solution. Not everyone in the group knew of places to get help. These women all relied on public transportation.

*The bus is too slow. Once you get to the transfer points, it's too slow.*

*A trip that would take 20-30 minutes in a car might take two hours by bus.*

*You can't live on \$5.15.*

*You have to know the schedule. You have to leave really early. A problem is that you have to drop off your kids before you go to work and on your way home.*

*The cost of transportation is an issue for poor people. People come into the Wilkerson Center to get money for transportation.*

Medical care has been an issue for these women. All had gone without care at one point or another. The cost of medical care was the main issue.

*The cost of SS70 (Social Security 70) is too much.*

*Some pediatricians won't take Medicaid.*

*You have to fill out the paperwork every three months. That's hard.*

*Medical care is available for everyone for \$11 a month. Even if you have a husband you can get it. It's hard to get parents covered, but it's easy to get kids covered. They need to make it easier for parents to get covered [with medical coverage].*

*You have to die at Parkland to be seen.*

*The service sucks at Parkland.*

*Children's [Medical Center of Dallas] is really good.*

*At Baylor Health care system, people make mistakes.*

The bureaucracy of government institutions was a source of complaints in this session. The importance of a good caseworker, who would work with you, was underscored.

*Why does it take so long to get Section 8 housing? The waiting list for housing is two years.*

*Some people get hooked up with Section 8. They help their relatives get Section 8. Sometimes it doesn't follow its own rules and regulations.*

*The police are slow to respond to domestic violence complaints.*

*When you go to government, sometime you get misinformation.*

*Some caseworkers work for you or with you to make the system work.*

*Different programs work differently. Sometimes you get the run around.*

*Non-profit organizations have a license to rob. Where does all the money [they raise] go? They go to conferences, have lunches...Only 20% of the money goes to welfare.*

It is a struggle for these women to find and afford child care. They felt it was harder for them, than for other parents to find affordable child care.

*Even if it's family members providing the child care, it's going to cost you.*

*It's hard to get help if you are an addict or an ex-offender.*

These women did not have a number of sources for social support. However, they did express the view that social support is important. They had strong negative views about people who abuse government assistance or who seek it when they don't really need it.

*Men don't need social support. They don't raise kids. They run off. Men are not as resourceful as women.*

*Social support is lacking in our society. It takes something traumatic to find out who your neighbors are.*

*There are so many people who judge you.*

*We are raising a generation of beggars. That's the only way they know how to live.*

## **Group 6 (Abused Women):**

These seven women are interested in finding high-paying jobs in workable locations, close to childcare. Transportation to and from work was also a priority. They felt their situations were not understood well. They would like to have a greater level of community awareness of domestic violence and its effects. *Over time people don't want to help because so many battered women go back to their abusers.* But we're not doing that. They believed the quality of caseworkers was very good at the Family Place and that they were being helped.

*It's hard to find a job in the field you're looking in. Something like paralegal, social work. Something in a medical field.*

*You have to make a plan for the location of your job. "How am I going to get my child to childcare, school or day care?"*

*Medical benefits from a job don't kick in right away.*

*Transportation is a problem when you rely on the bus. It's a tight schedule from home to school or daycare to work and back to school or daycare and back home.*

*Children have a way of life they're comfortable with. It's hard to keep that standard. I have older children, you just can't make do. They are not used to having to compromise.*

*If someone gets sick, can you afford band aids or Nyquil?*

*You have to learn not just to stretch the dollar, but the pennies.*

As was the case with other groups, this group felt as if they were not treated with respect by service agency or government employees. They felt they were looked down upon. They feel they are made to feel inadequate when asking for assistance.

*Without TANF or child support, how or where do you get the resources for cloths and all the things your kids need? Don't try going through the churches...*

*I don't want to be looked down upon.*

*The resources are out there. You have to build up a resource list. The resources are spread out. You have to choose how you're going to spend your time and energy.*

*If you say you're in transitional housing, you get different kind of looks. Their behavior is rude and curt. They are not civil.*

Medicaid was viewed as a resource for the children, but it benefits the children only. The quality of care provided by Medicaid was criticized.

*When you have Medicaid, you do not get compassion.*

*Medicaid is hard to get. It's like pulling teeth. The application process – the delay -- the need for proof.*

*There are competing requirements for this shelter and Medicaid and the social support offices. Organizations don't pass information to each other. It creates conflicting requirements. It's very confusing.*

*The choice of providers is limited. You can't just use who you want to. Sometimes it's trail and error to find a good doctor.*

Most of these women had had positive experience with government institutions. Their first contact with government institutions was typically through the police department or the legal system.

*The DA referred me to the Family Place. That office was very helpful. I felt safe. They went above and beyond.*

*A police officer gave me a list of shelters I could go to.*

*The police are more educated about domestic violence. They know the majority of women go back.*

*A police officer said to me, "Hispanics are stupid. They put up with this [domestic Violence]."*

*The CPS were my angels. They helped me with problems with my daughter. They helped with their prayers and clothing. The caseworkers were awesome.*

*CPS took my son away for one month because I forget to sign out. I only signed in one book, not in both books. The attorney here was helpful, but that was wrong [for CPS to take her son].*

These women were receiving help in their effort to find permanent child care, but still felt that the process was a difficult one. All had children living with them.

*CCMS and DHS have a brochure to help you find child care. It's a lot of work. A lot of self work. You have to go to 3, 4, 5, 6 a day, but it's your child. The Family Place has a list of [daycare] centers and home providers.*

*CCMS/DHS moves slowly. If you are working, it will pay up to three months of child care. They'll pay for it while you are in school. Location, cost, and quality are all issues. Soon the weather will be cold and you have to take them on the bus. I'm concerned about what I'll do [for child care] once I'm back in the community.*

This group felt everyone, male and female, needs social support and respect from government employees. They felt that social support was hard for them to get.

*Men need it, too. Men have domestic violence issues, too. They need support in a different way than women do.*

*It's hurtful when people say, "you women always go back."*

*My experience is that people don't see us as individuals, but as cases, as hassles, as problems. This needs to effect the job evaluations [of caseworkers].*

*I get social support from my caseworkers and from the other women here.*

*I get support from my church.*

*Feeling like you can't trust anyone makes it hard to have social support. I sleep instead.*

When asked what they would identify as key issues, this group identified: housing, immigration help if they were from another country, and health care for adults over 21.

## **Group 7 (Executive/Business Women):**

The concerns of these executive women were very different than the concerns of any of women in other focus group sessions. They were all currently employed. None expressed an active concern about the security of their own job. However, they did recognize that many women do have employment concerns.

*This concern may target lower paying jobs.*

*Economic downturns hit the soft side of business first. That means more women are hit first.*

*There are a lot of women who work part time, without benefits. They are harder hit.*

*You hear more now that “I’m just glad I have my job.”*

*I have heard a male boss say, “I didn’t want to let a man go because he had a wife and kids to support.” That’s so 1970s. That comment was really scary to me. I really thought that feeling had gone away.*

*Some sectors are being hit harder than others in Dallas. Hospitality, travel, and technology.*

*We graduate enough teachers, but the graduates don’t end up taking a teaching job.*

*In the nursing field, not enough nurses are willing to be teachers, so we can’t train enough teachers. Government regulations and more paper work make it harder to be a nurse today.*

*Executive women do worry about their jobs, but in a different way. Everyone is at risk today.*

*Government workers and those in higher education have less fear of losing this job.*

*Men take care of each other. Women do not take care of each other in the same way. Women need a champion to get them to the next level.*

These women felt that women were more concerned about health care and health care insurance than were men. They were concerned about the increasing cost of health care, sometimes largely from an employer’s perspective. Unlike women in the other groups, no one in this group expressed the view that she had gone without health care when it was needed.

*The cost of health care is increasing and what you get in return has decreased.*

*It can make a difference for job choices for lower-level jobs.*

*Workers compensation costs have increased dramatically for companies.*

*For people on the margin the cost of health insurance is an issue. Even the co-pay can be a problem.*

*Retirement plans—that’s more an issue for me than health care or health insurance. I worry about health care for my parents.*

*Elder care is an issue that touches women. It’s usually women who have this responsibility. That, and caring for grandchildren.*

*It is hard for executive women to leave work when someone is sick. The expansion in the FMLA [Family and Medical Leave Act] does not help us. Executive women cannot leave their jobs.*

*Dallas is very stratified by race and ethnicity. Their conditions are very disparate. What we need is high quality in our HMOs. The number of specialist being included in the plans is decreasing. Doctors are dropping plans. Doctors need to be able to get malpractice insurance, or they won't be practicing.*

*For someone who depends on public transportation, health care and the availability of health care would be a bigger burden. How do they get their kids to a doctor?*

*A lot of the workforce is on the margin. They make enough that they are not eligible for government services. That's a tough problem for employers to face.*

This group expressed the view that the need for improved child care options had been an issue for a number of years. They felt that government agencies had been trying to assist in this area.

*Seminars on child care are always well attended.*

*There's not flexibility for child care in the corporate world. Child care is really one area in which the corporate world needs flexibility.*

*We let employees share saved leave. That can be a help to some.*

*We [employers? Society?] need to keep moving forward on benefit options. Cafeteria plans are what people need.*

*Dallas has fewer men that stay home. My husband has always stayed home with our kids.*

*The cost of child care is high in Dallas. Lower cost child care is harder to find. Quality child care is what we need.*

As these women have moved upward in the business world, they believe the level of social support they receive has decreased.

*Women feel responsibility to give back – to be aware of the community—taking care of family and friends.*

*We don't have a lot of time to give to the community, so what we end up doing is giving checks. That can be good, too.*

*Women do have to search out support.*

*Executive women know a lot of people. We can pull strings. More men call for help than women. Men do it all the time. Women feel more accountable.*

*Golf is how men build relationships. For women, the most expensive thing we own is time.*

*All of the things at work that could allow you to be more social get pushed out for work and family. Socially men spend more time on relationships.*

*Building friendships takes time. Usually we can't invest the time. I feel responsibility to mentor other women, but that takes a lot of time. I combine time for physical fitness with meeting friends.*

When asked about what pressing issues they face, these women identified several. Being comfortable with money and learning how to act like an executive were among those most frequently mentioned.

*Women need to understand money and how to use it. How do we make money? What do we want to get for our money?*

*Women make a lot of buying decisions. We are comfortable with household budget, but beyond that...we don't know anything about budgets. We need somewhere to go to get information on managing money.*

*Women don't feel secure with the money they have.*

*We need information on the stock market...following it...keeping up with it.*

*Not enough women know how to talk like a CEO. That's something we need to learn.*

*I'd put more time into the Dallas Women's Foundation if I thought it was really going to help women.*

*It's hard to raise money for "women's only" issues.*

## **Group 8 (Homeless Women):**

These women were particularly struggling with finding a job and securing alternative housing arrangements. At least one of these women appeared to have an untreated mental illness. They viewed jobs as hard to find and difficult to hold. Only one was currently employed outside the shelter. None were employed in a full-time position. Only two had children. The children were not living with these parents.

*I work hard to get a job because I have a downs syndrome child I want to get back.*

*A job with a good wage is hard to come by. Minimum wage is not enough to get housing. I need to go to college, but how?*

*Good jobs are out there, but not if you don't have transportation or an education.*

*People need a way to get a car of their own. The bus system is not enough. I need money for a reliable car and tires. A car is a big expense. You miss out on jobs because of the bus system.*

*The shelters need a way to give people money for bus fare. I don't have money for bus fare. I can't get away from the shelter because I don't have the fare.*

*My goal is to get a job that gives me enough money for an apartment and food without being on welfare.*

*Education is a big problem for me. I want to go to college, but I already defaulted on my loans. Now how do I go back to school? I do not want my future to be a hamburger place.*

*It's a job.*

*It's easier for a man to get a job. They can get a construction job. No one wants to hire me for a construction job. Men get out of here [the shelter] more than women.*

Finding clean, affordable housing was a priority for this group of homeless women. All expressed the desire to know more about how to get housing.

*Some public housing is not clean. People need to fix it up.*

*To get housing in Dallas you need to get on the list.*

*Stewpot can help you find housing. They can help with health care and dental, too. You need your social security number and birth certificate though.*

*The Dallas Life Foundation can help, too.*

These homeless women did not have health care coverage and did not receive regular medical exams. All suggested they had gone without medical care when they thought they needed it because of the lack of ability to pay for it.

*There's Medicaid for children, so that's not an issue.*

*When you're a teenage you can get care. After that it costs.*

*Dental care is a big thing. And the need for glasses. It's the cost. People stress you out over the bill. Nothing in life is free. Money doesn't grow on trees.*

*While you're in the shelter a van comes to give medical care. But they can't see everyone. You have to get there right away. The van comes from the resource center on Ervay. I believe you can go there [for help].*

Group 8 had not had positive experiences with government institutions. Their views of government were negative.

*CPS in Texas is not right. My baby has been abused in foster care. CPS listens more to the foster parents than to me.*

*My program [probation?] requires visits to a drug treatment center. It's hard to get there from here. That makes it hard to get my child back.*

*Prosecutors suck. They should have given me a fine over not returning a video [from a rental store]. There was \$660 restitution charge. I didn't have a lawyer, which made it worse. I got six months probation. Poor people get mistreated.*

*I don't think there are a lot of organizations that help people get out of here. No one comes here to give information or job training. You have to have your paperwork. You have to have a job to get a bus pass. You have to have a job for more than \$7 per hour. You have to have a deposit and an application fee to get an apartment...*

*No one wants to reunite mother and child.*

*My mother has my son. She says I can have him back if I get my life together, but how am I supposed to do that?*

These women did not have a source of social support, although, they believed social support to be important.

*I have no one.*

*I don't have anyone to turn to. If I did I wouldn't be here. This is just a roof. This is not my roof.*

When asked about what they would like to see be done to assist them, this group had several responses. The need for education and job training were at the top of their list. Employment assistance and child care help were also viewed as important.

### **Group 9 (Women with Mental Illness):**

This group of 5 women had come to LifeNet from other organizations or through doctor recommendations. None of the women had young children living with them at the present time. Most of them were not looking for jobs at the current time. One was employed in a full-time position and one was employed in a part time position. The other three were disabled. However, they had a number of views of the current employment and housing markets.

*Some females have a poor job history. A guy would come closer to getting a job.*

*It is hard to have time to look for a job.*

*Women need to be let know that you [they] have to have a degree and there are places where you can get credit for life skills.*

*Money is a concern. I do odd jobs for money, for cash.*

*I am borrowing from my retirement. How can you do that for a long time? I thank God I have that.*

*It's getting harder to work since 9-11. The unemployment rate is higher. There is a lot of competition for jobs. People are taking jobs that they would not have taken before, which makes it harder for women in this situation [women with mental illness looking for a job].*

This group was very aware of high health care and prescription costs. All were taking a variety of medications for physical and mental illnesses. All had done without some of those medicines from time-to-time because of the costs of those medicines or medical care.

*I'm going without my arthritis medication right now because it costs too much.*

*I do not have enough money to see the specialist I need to see.*

*My medicine has side effects that should be treated, but I can't see the doctor.*

*I get samples from my family doctor for my allergies. You can ask for samples. Your doctor always has some.*

*It will take \$800 to rework my hearing aid and I don't have that. They [government and other organizations] don't help you in between income levels.*

*Some people are getting medicine from Mexico. I use my credit cards to buy prescriptions in an emergency.*

*Medicaid only covers three prescriptions. If you have any more than that you have to pay for them yourself or some other way.*

*Some insurance coverage is not that good. The discount is not that much.*

*It's a matter of quality of care. If you have pre-existing conditions, they won't cover you.*

*Health care is not available for people without jobs. Even if you have a job, employers don't have to offer it.*

*I have a head injury and people take advantage of me. That's why I don't work.*

*The medicines mess up your life and your schedule. I have a hard time getting the energy to get up in the morning. I'm not neat and tidy anymore. I sleep during the day. When I was working I was more on top of things. Now that's not so.*

*All I do is sit and watch TV. Time is just passing me by.*

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Group 9's view of government institutions was mixed. Again, this group felt they were not treated with respect by government employees.

*The Dallas Police Department failed me. I was raped. I ran into a bus station and told them "I have been raped." They should have taken me to the hospital, but they just took me home. My mom thought it was my fault.*

*Government workers resent having to help us. They can't be bothered. A lot of them are black and have attitude.*

*You have to have a baby to get help. Having a baby is not the answer. That's not the right thing to do. Not having a child shouldn't keep you from getting help.*

*I'm thankful to the government. When I was working, I never made more than \$7.50 an hour and that was poverty level. A man in my position made much more than I did. Now, I'm getting support and I'm about to get Section 8 housing so that we can live comfortably. Also, now, I'm on probation and someone's helping me with that. If it wasn't for the government helping me see that I have a problem and understanding then I'd be lost. Otherwise, I have no friends and I'm bi-polar. Employers don't understand that. They fire you for that.*

The women in this group need social support, but it is not always available to them. They felt social support could help them with their illnesses.

*My counselor is my only source of support.*

*My mother and grandmother are a source of support.*

*I have male and female friends. My church helps, too.*

*Social support is very helpful. Without it you don't have motivation. The idea comes, but you can't act on it.*

*I wish caseworkers would appreciate me as a person...that someone would hear me. I want someone just to spend time with.*

*Women are more in touch with their feelings.*

*Yes, I need social support more than men. They are not aware of "I am lonely or depressed today..." Men don't know how to talk about their feelings.*

When asked for final comments, this group had a number of suggestions for the Dallas Women's Foundation.

*Birth control is an issue. That needs to be made available.*

*People don't know about resources like LifeNet. LifeNet is getting so big, some things, like fieldtrips, can't be done. Most people don't know about LifeNet.*

*My caseworker didn't know about LifeNet. This is a person who works for the government. If she didn't know about LifeNet, how are people like us supposed to know about it?*

*Women need to get an education and have it be affordable.*

*Mental and other kinds of abuse are out there.*

*Adoption is an alternative to having a child. It is not the end of the world to give your child up for adoption. It's an act of love. There are other options out there.*

*Get help if you are abusing a child. You can get help.*

### **Group 10 (Teenage Mothers):**

This group of six teenage mothers was very different from the other focus group participants. Most have never held a job. Two were working in part-time jobs. One was living in her own apartment. The remaining five were living with their parents or other relatives. They planned to finish high school before looking for full-time employment. Most of these mothers do not drive yet.

*It is hard to get a job. We don't have any experience.*

*Holding a job is hard, too. After a while I get lazy. I don't want to go. I call in sick.*

*I baby-sit on Saturdays. It's hard to get a regular job around that.*

*It's harder to work when you have a child. You need to have days off for the child.*

*Transportation is difficult. To get to a job you have to take the bus or someone else has to drive you.*

*It can take two years to get into public housing. That's too long.*

The session was held at a church, which co-sponsors a low-cost day care program for teen mothers. The mothers are required to stay in school in order for their child to attend the day care program. Day care, other than the arrangements they already have, is not a concern for these women. Their schools helped them find this day care center. They noted that in order to have their child in day care at this center, the mothers have to be in high school and passing their classes. Tutoring is available for them as part of the program.

These women were aware of the need for good medical care. However, they did not always go to the doctor's office when they or their child was ill.

*I have Medicaid for my child. My Dad has a Medicaid card for me.*

*It was hard for me to get Medicaid for my baby because his father as supposed to be paying child support.*

*At the parenting class they told us about Medicaid and CHIPs.*

*Sometimes I don't take my kid to the doctor if I know that he just needs Tylenol.*

This group received social support from a number of venues. The referred to support they received from grandparents, husbands, boyfriends, siblings, parents, friends, and their schools. They attend a parenting class at school.

*In an emergency I would go to the government for help, but it's not an emergency.*

*I had problems getting SSI. The caseworker was on me. She shouldn't be giving me attitude.*

*TANF helps a lot with caring for your child.*

*I get CCMS through the government.*

*The PEP program at school that told me about this day care is a good program.*

Money and graduating were the biggest concerns for Group 10. They would like to see other services provided, as well.

*The money for this day care [center] is due on Friday. My husband gets paid on Friday. It's hard to get the money here on time. Why can't we pay on Monday? If you pay on Monday, you have to pay \$5 more.*

*I need to graduate to get a good job. Most jobs don't pay enough money. A good job would be in telemarketing or computers. The job needs to give you benefits.*

*You need a job that pays \$9 per hour. I have an apartment. I have to get \$9 per hour to pay for that and the other stuff.*

*There needs to be more jobs available.*

*Some programs provide diapers, counseling, and parenting classes. Those are good.*

This group spent a great deal of time sharing information with each other about how and where to get services. They were very interested in ways to get an apartment or services for their children. Most got information about government and non-profit services through word of mouth, rather than through formal channels of communication (i.e., schools or social workers).

## CONCLUSION

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Since the focus group findings cannot be generalized to the broader populations of women in each of the focus group categories, care must be exercised in drawing conclusions. Reported here are some of the summary comments from each of the 10 groups.

Overall, women in the grandparent group would like to see more funds made available for helping grandparents meet the costs of raising their grandchildren. They believed grandparents would also benefit from other, younger adults interacting with their grandkids, and streamlined procedures for enrolling their grandchildren in public assistance programs.

Lesbian women agreed they would like to see funds and interest given to developing a resource center that included a health clinic to address women and lesbian concerns. They did not feel that these concerns are met adequately in Dallas at present.

Homeless women with children had several suggestions for what could be done to improve their situation. Among their suggestions were: no funding cuts for TANF or food stamps; lengthening the eligibility for public assistance programs; making affordable housing for homeless people a priority; and increasing the accountability for polite behavior among government employees.

Overall, women in recovery sought more information about ways in which they could improve their chances of long term recovery and the status of their children. They would like to see more efforts made to education women about resources available from public and private organizations. *We need a hub we can go to for all kids of information and we need a way to know the hub exists.* They suggested information be given to police officers to distribute as needed. In addition, they thought a group could be formed to go out to various places like Nexus to give information to women.

Women living in poverty did not have a number of sources for social support. However, they did express the view that social support is important. They had strong negative views about people who abuse government assistance or who seek it when they don't really need it.

When asked what they would identify as key issues, abused women identified: housing, immigration help if they were from another country, and health care for adults over 21.

When asked about what pressing issues they face, executive women identified several. Being comfortable with money and learning how to act like an executive were among those most frequently mentioned.

When asked about what they would like to see be done to assist them, homeless women had several responses. The need for education and job training were at the top of their list. Employment assistance and child care help were also viewed as important.

Women with mental illness had a number of suggestions for the Dallas Women's Foundation. Birth control is an issue and there needs to be made available. People do not know about resources like LifeNet. Women need to get an education and have it be affordable.

Teen mothers spent a great deal of time sharing information with each other about how and where to get services. They were very interested in ways to get an apartment or services for their children. Most got information about government and non-profit services through word of mouth, rather than through formal channels of communication (i.e., schools or social workers).

## **APPENDIX A**

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### **Focus Groups**

Group 1.

Date: October 18, 2002

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Dallas Urban League

Target Group: Grandmothers raising grandchildren

Racial Composition: all participants were African American

Number of Participants: 6

Group 2.

Date: October 21, 2002

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Cathedral of Hope

Target Group: Lesbians

Number of Participants: 13

Racial Composition: 4 Hispanic Americans, 1 African American, and 8 European Americans

Group 3.

Date: October 23, 2002

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Vogel Alcove

Target Group: Homeless Women with Children

Racial Composition: 6 Hispanic Americans, 4 African Americans, 3 European Americans

Number of Participants: 13

Group 4.

Date: October 24, 2002

Time: 10 a.m.

Location: Nexus Recovery Center

Target Group: Drug & Alcohol Abusers/Women in Recovery

Racial composition: 3 Hispanic Americans, 3 African Americans, 6 European Americans

Number of Participants: 12

Group 5.

Date: October 24

Time 6:15 p.m.

Location: Shared Housing

Target Group: Women at 200% poverty

Racial Composition: 1 Hispanic American, 4 African Americans, 1 European American

Number of Participants: 6

Group 6.

Date: October 28

Time: 12:45 p.m.

Location: The Family Place

Target Group: Abused Women

Racial Composition: 3 Hispanic Americans, 2 African Americans, 2 European Americans

Number of Participants: 7

Group 7.

Date: October 29, 2002

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Dallas Women's Foundation

Target Group: Women Business Executives

Racial Composition: 12 European Americans

Number of Participants: 12

Group 8.

Date: November 4

Time: 2 p.m.

Location: Austin Street Shelter

Target Group: Homeless Women

Racial Composition: 3 African Americans, 3 European Americans

Number of Participants: 5

Group 9.

Date: November 12, 2002

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Location: LifeNet

Target Group: Women with mental illness

Racial Composition: 5 European Americans

Number of Participants: 5

Group 10.

Date: November 13, 2002

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Location: YMCA

Target Group: Teenage Mothers

Racial Composition: 5 Hispanic Americans, 1 African American

Number of Participants: 6

## **APPENDIX B**

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### **Focus Group Script for Adult Women**

## **I. Moderator Introduction**

“We are talking to women in Dallas County about the Status of Women and Girls. Your feedback will help us understand the issues, challenges and service needs of women and girls throughout this area. Please don’t feel that you have to see eye-to-eye with everyone, or anyone, in this room. There are no right or wrong answers here. Each opinion is as meaningful as the next, so don’t be afraid to speak up. Your honest assessment of the topics discussed is important. We will be audio taping this session so that I won’t have to take notes. Nobody else will hear the tape and it will not be released to the public. Your name will not be linked with your comments in any way.”

## **II. Introductions/Warm-up**

“Let’s start by helping me get to know a little bit about you. Please tell us your name and tell us something about you.”

## **III. Topics of Discussion**

### **A. Employment/Money:**

“Employment and job concerns can be a big concern to women. Do you think employment or job concerns are a big issue for women in Dallas County today?”

Probe: “Do you have employment or job concerns? What are those concerns?”

Probe: “Do you feel you have more concerns than you did one year ago? Five years ago?”

Probe: “Do you feel that your concerns or lack of concerns are influenced by the fact you are a woman?”

Probe: “Has paying your bills ever been a problem? If so, what did you do?”

Probe: “Is transportation for work a concern for women in this area?”

### **B. Health Issues:**

“A lot of people are talking about issues with women’s health these days. Do you have health concerns?”

Probe: “If you or a member of your family needed medical attention, what would you do? Where would you go for care?”

Probe: "Have there been times when you or a member of your family needed medical attention, but didn't get it? Why didn't you or they get the needed medical help?"

Probe: "Do you feel medical help is generally available for women who need it? Why or why not?"

#### C. Interaction with Government Institutions:

"Sometimes women turn to government institutions for help. Government institutions might include the fire or police departments, the court system, or some form of social services like food stamps or public housing assistance. Have you ever turned to government institutions for help?"

Probe: "If you have received assistance, did you find these institutions to be helpful?"

Probe: "If you have not received assistance, do you believe you would find these institutions to be helpful?"

#### D. Childcare:

"What are the biggest problems that you have with child care or child rearing and what is the greatest asset you have helping you with child care and child rearing?"

Probe: "What other child care issues do you believe impact women in your community?"

Probe: "What assistance in child care would be the most helpful to you and to women in your community?"

Probe: "What kind of social pressures do you believe affect you and your relationship with your children?" (i.e., drugs, gangs, emotional issues, criminal activity, grades at school, disciplinary issues.)

#### E. Social Support:

"Is there someone that you depend on to help you in an emergency or on a day-to-day basis?"

Probe: How necessary is that person as a source of support for you? What kind of support do they give you (economic, social, emotional, etc.)?

Probe: "Do you think women rely more on this kind of support than men?"

#### **IV. Conclusions**

“Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I appreciate the feedback you have given me.”

“Are there topics that we have not discussed today that we should have?”

“Is there anything else someone would like to add before we conclude this session?”

Does anyone have any more comments or questions?

\* \* \* \* \*

“Thank you for your help! Your comments will be very useful. If you have any more questions, comments or concerns, or if you just want to find out more information about this study, you can call the Survey Research Center at the University of North Texas at 940-565-3221.”

## **APPENDIX C**

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# **Focus Group Discussion Guide**

**I. Moderator Introduction**

**II. Introductions/Warm-up**

**III. Topics of Discussion**

- A. Employment/Money
- B. Health Issues
- C. Interaction with Government Institutions
- D. Childcare
- E. Social Support

**IV. Conclusions**

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Thank you for your help! Your comments will be very useful. If you have any more questions, comments or concerns, or if you just want to find out more information about this study, you can call the Survey Research Center at the University of North Texas at 940-565-3221.

## **APPENDIX D**

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### **Notice of Consent**

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Focus Group: Issues Facing Women in Dallas County

This focus group is being conducted for the Dallas Women’s Foundation (DWF) under the direction of the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the University of North Texas and in compliance with all state and federal regulations concerning the use of human subjects in research.

The purpose of the focus group is to discuss issues facing women in Dallas County. The findings of this focus group will be used by DWF staff and SRC staff to identify issues and problems of concern to women in Dallas County.

We will be audio taping the discussion today so that your comments can be heard and we can take more extensive notes. All of your comments will be kept completely confidential. Your name will not be linked with any specific comments in this focus group or any reports describing this focus group. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to leave at any time.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please call the (University of North Texas Institutional Review Board at 800-687-7055. If you have any questions or concerns about the nature of this research or the professionalism of the person conducting this focus group, contact the Survey Research Center 940-565-3221.

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this focus group by printing and signing your name in the space below. The copy of this text below the signature line can be detached for your future reference.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_