

Informal Discussions with Residents

Informal discussions with senior residents can often tell you as much about the community and the people who live there as more systematic information-gathering approaches. Because they are not as scripted, informal discussions are useful as a complement to focus groups, surveys, and key informant interviews.

Asking peer leaders, rather than a trained facilitator, to bring together other residents fosters broad-based participation in the development of a NORC program. Because it facilitates discussion among seniors who might not feel comfortable signing up for a “research project,” it also enables you to hear a greater variety of community voices.

An informal discussion works best when the topic is focused and clear, the discussion is scheduled for a limited period of time (typically an hour), and the leader is offered guidance on facilitating a productive discussion, not a “gripe session.”

A volunteer should take notes during the discussion and report the results back to program staff and other partners and advisors.