#### Youth and Family Member Interview Questions

#### Background

Mecklenburg County wants to enhance the experiences of youth and families within the juvenile justice system, particularly in accessing quality behavioral health services and interventions. To achieve this, the county has partnered with Empower Community Care and Alliance Health to conduct a system assessment to understand current practices better. We are interviewing individuals impacted by the system and those responsible for providing services. Additionally, we will review data and visit programs to gain insights into operations and perspectives.

This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The information gathered will be used to identify common themes, but individual comments will remain anonymous. Any transcript or notes captured during the interview will only be shared internally to prepare our report. You are encouraged to discuss topics outside of the questions if you believe it will help us better understand the system's needs.

1. (For background) Tell me a bit about yourself and your family. What would you say are your top two strengths, or things that people would point to as strengths you and your family have?
2. Describe when you/your child first started getting into trouble, such as having challenges at school, home, or with friends.
3. What program or services did you participate in because of these challenges?
   1. How were they helpful?
   2. What more could have been done at the time?
   3. What, if any, other types of services do you feel you needed that were not offered or provided?
4. Describe when you first became involved in the juvenile justice system.
   1. What was positive about that involvement?
   2. What would you have changed about it?
5. Let’s talk about your/your child’s most recent involvement with the system. If you are willing, please share details about the incident that led to your involvement.
   1. If arrested, describe your experience with law enforcement.
   2. If placed in detention, describe your experience with that placement (how long were you there, what services you received, what you experienced, etc.)
6. How were you made aware of what would happen after your arrest/referral to juvenile court?
   1. Is there anything you would change?
7. Consider your experience after your arrest/referral to juvenile court. Describe the court process.
   1. Who did you meet with before court?
   2. What information was shared with you and was it explained in a manner that was easy to understand?
   3. How were you able to express your opinion or voice your concerns?
   4. If you met with the judge, did you or your family member have an opportunity to speak and be heard?
   5. How satisfied were you in being able to speak up?
   6. How often did you go to court before the case was resolved and a court order was issued?
   7. What was the outcome and how satisfied were you with the outcome?
8. Let’s discuss what happened after court.
   1. If you/your child were placed on probation, how long was the probation period, and what was required?
   2. What assessments did you/your child complete, and what interviews did you/your child have about your/your child’s history, current challenges, and needs?
   3. Did you receive feedback on the results or conclusions of the assessments/interviews that you/your child participated in?
   4. Was a plan developed that outlined goals and activities you would participate in?
      1. To what extent did the plan reflect what you wanted to work on?
      2. How well was the plan explained to you?
      3. How involved were you in putting together this plan?
         1. Very
         2. Somewhat
         3. Very little
         4. Not at all
9. What services or programs were you referred to, and for what purpose? Did the program/service match your/your child’s needs?
   1. Could you start services immediately, or did you have to wait for them to become available?
   2. Did the service provider give you a clear explanation of the type of service you would be receiving and how it would help?
   3. What barriers, if any, did you encounter when accessing services (e.g., transportation, language, time of services, childcare, etc.)?
   4. How long did you/your child participate in the program/services?
   5. Did you/your child complete the program/recommended number of services?
   6. Would you say you were successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful in completing your goals with the program/services?
10. How did the program/services help you/your child succeed, learn positive behaviors, or function better as a family?
11. How long did you/your child remain involved in the system or on probation in Mecklenburg County?
12. What would you say was most helpful to you and/or your family member about the juvenile justice system in Mecklenburg County?
13. What would you say was least helpful or even problematic for you or your family member about the juvenile justice system in Mecklenburg County?
14. Considering your journey from when you were brought before the judge in court to your/your child’s placement on probation and/or involvement with programs and services, how would you describe your experience of the youth justice system in Mecklenburg County overall? Please explain your rating.
    1. GREAT – 5 Stars! Going through the process saved me/my family
    2. GOOD – no complaints
    3. OK – but there were a few problems/concerns (mixed feelings)
    4. NOT GOOD – there were frequent problems, and/or we did not get what we needed
    5. HORRIBLE – nothing went well, and it caused our family more stress and more problems as a result
15. What would you select if you could pick two things for the county to focus on in the next 2 to 5 years to serve youth and families better and reduce unlawful behavior and gun violence?
16. What barriers may hinder the juvenile justice system from making the changes and improvements you suggest?
17. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion that would help inform the recommendations to the county?