**York University**

**Informed Consent Form 1 for Focus Group**

**Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Study Name**: Stigmatization in the Greater Toronto Area during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Setting a Stigma-focused Agenda for Emergency Management

**Researchers**:

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**Purpose of the Research:**

The goal of this research project is to develop/enhance the capacity of emergency management officials to counter stigmatization during and after a disaster.

**What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research**:

You will be asked to return this informed consent document prior to participating in an in-person focus group session with other experts in the emergency management profession. During the focus group session, you have an opportunity to provide insight on the forms and impacts of stigmatization in an emergency and how to enhance public capacities in managing stigma during emergencies.

We will conduct four focus group sessions. Of the four focus group sessions to be held, three will be based on job functions:

* Emergency management officials (sample size: 5-10 participants).
* First responders (police, firefighters, Armed Forces, and public health personnel) (sample size: 5-10 participants).
* Employees of non-governmental organizations and volunteer groups involved in COVID-19 response (sample size: 5-10 participants).

The fourth focus group session will bring interested professionals from all the functional areas who participated in the first three focus groups together. We anticipate having approximately 20-30 people in the fourth session.

The estimated participation time is 60-90 minutes. There will be no inducements and no financial compensation provided for your participation.

Data will be collected by handwritten notes and digital audio recording, and this form asks your permission to collect such data.

**Risks and Discomforts**:

If you feel anxious or distressed when participating in the focus group, we will advise you to stop until you feel ready to continue, skip the particular question, or decide to stop participating in the focus group. While it is anticipated that participants in focus groups will be at minimal risk, mental health services are available to anyone who wishes to access these services as described below:

* If in the event of participating you become uncomfortable and you need mental health coping assistance, help is available. You are encouraged to call 211 to be connected to the services that will best meet your needs.
* Frontline workers in the Greater Toronto Area dealing with anxiety, stress, fear, isolation, or other difficult emotions are able to text 741731 for free crisis counseling. There are multiple mental health resources in the GTA given where you are located.
* There are also a number of private psychotherapists across Canada. To find such professionals, the websites therapists.psychologytoday.com and www.theravive.com can be useful.

Please note that your decision to participate or not participate in this study will not influence your relationship with the researchers, York University, or the Canadian disaster and emergency management community as a whole.

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You**:

Your participation in this research will accrue no direct benefits to you. This study can potentially have societal benefits to help improve emergency preparedness and response, especially with respect to stigmatization management and the role emergency management officials can play in mitigating its risks. We hope that the outcome of our research will help you to develop your understanding of stigmatization as a social and public health emergency that deserves serious attention.

**Voluntary Participation**:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to participate will not influence the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the Study**:

You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or York University, either now or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study at any point before analysis is complete, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

**Confidentiality**:

Due to the nature of focus groups, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, we ask that participants respect the privacy of others and not share information outside of the focus group. The researchers will keep all information you supply during the research in confidence, and unless you specifically indicate your consent your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Data will be collected by handwritten notes and digital audio recordings. Audio recordings will be saved in a password-protected file to research team members’ local computers, not the cloud-based service. Given that focus groups will be digitally recorded, once the transcription is complete, these digitally recorded focus groups will be permanently deleted. Personal information will not be transcribed from recordings. All transcribed materials associated with this project will be anonymized. Given that tri-agency now considers it best practice to deposit research data into a data repository, we plan to deposit anonymized transcriptions and other relevant data to a secure, university-approved data repository. All anonymized data will be stored in the repository indefinitely.

The data collected in this research project may be used, in anonymized form, by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional Research Ethics Board (REB). Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

**Questions About the Research?**

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Aaida Mamuji either by telephone at 416-736-2100, extension 33875 or by e-mail amamuji@yorku.ca.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University’s Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Director, Research Ethics in the Office of Research Ethics, Kaneff Tower, York University (e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

**Legal Rights and Signatures**:

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the Stigmatization in the Greater Toronto Area during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Setting a Stigma-focused Agenda for Emergency Management focus group. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature Date**

Participant

**Signature Date**

Principal Investigator 1

**Additional Consent:**

1. **Audio recording**

* I consent to the audio-recording of my focus group(s)

1. **Consent to waive anonymity**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ consent to the use of my name in the publications arising from this research.

1. **Consent to use of quotes**

I consent to the use of quotations in any final reports/ publications of the research? Y / N

1. **Consent to data deposit**

I understand that my de-identified data will be placed into an open research data repository. Y / N

**Signature Date**

Participant

**Signature Date**

Principal Investigator 1