

Online Survey Consent Procedures

Online surveys require **Informed Consent** (from human research participants age 18 and older) and **Minor Assent** (from participants under age 18). The IRB will determine whether **documentation of Parental Permission** is required.

1. All information regarding the research and the voluntary nature of their participation must be given to the research participants before they begin the survey.
2. The following statement or something similar should be included:

There is always the possibility of tampering from an outside source when using the internet for collecting information. While the confidentiality of your responses will be protected once the data are downloaded from the internet, there is always a possibility of hacking or other security breaches that could threaten the confidentiality of your responses. Please know that you are free to decide not to answer any question.

3. The survey should be set up in a way that the potential participant must click on a 'button' or type in a response indicating that he/she has read the consent/assent information and agrees to participate. Once the 'button' is selected, the potential participant will be redirected to the research survey questionnaire. That is, the survey questions are not viewed by participant until he/she clicks on or types in a response to indicate his/her voluntary participation.
4. The following procedures should be used to protect confidentiality of downloaded data:
 - If IP addresses are collected by the survey tool, the addresses should be deleted from the downloaded data file. All responses should then be deleted from the online survey. The resulting data file that is used for data analysis should be free of any identifiers, including IP addresses or other electronic identifiers.
 - The data file should be stored on a password protected computer. Any back up data files should be also be stored in a secure location.

Documented Parental Permission when required by the IRB

The following are several ways to obtain documented/written parental permission (when required by the IRB) prior to a minor participant completing the survey:

1. Parental consent may be obtained using valid electronic signatures and emailed to the researcher.
2. A copy of a signed permission document may be scanned and e-mailed (or faxed) back to the researcher.
3. The minor participant could complete an online form that collects parental contact information such as an email address, phone number, fax number, and physical address. This form would then be emailed to the researcher who would then contact the parent/guardian directly.

4. Programs exist that will assist the researcher in collecting documented Parental Permission. Some commercial survey packages contain this functionality.
5. Another option is to setup two surveys: one to collect information for Parental Permission and one to conduct the actual survey. For example:
 - A participant recruitment survey could be constructed that describes information related to the survey document and the aims of the research. When minor participants are interested in participating in the survey, they complete this survey document that collects the parental contact information as described above. A parental information packet with proper consenting documents and information is then provided to the participant's parent/guardian. Once completed by the parent/guardian, the form is returned to the researcher via the method specified in the study information packet (email, postal mail, or fax).
 - When this form is obtained from the participant's parent/guardian, an email link is then sent to the minor participant, containing a link to the actual survey and a password. The participant would follow the link, type in the password, give their electronic assent to participating, and then complete the survey.