

Guidelines for 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). Additionally, minor participants will require **documentation of Parental Permission**.

1. All information required in a consent form (e.g., voluntary nature of participation, what participation entails, risks, etc.) must be presented to the participants before they begin the survey.

Due to privacy risks inherent in online research, the following statement or something similar should be included:

- a. 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.*
2. 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/they has read the consent/assent information (as described in 1 above) and agrees to participate. Once the ‘button’ is selected, the potential participant will be directed to the research survey questionnaire. That is, the survey questions are not viewed by participant until he/she/they clicks on or types in a response to indicate his/her/their voluntary participation.
3. The following procedures should be used to protect confidentiality of downloaded data:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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

The following are several ways to obtain documented/written parental permission prior to a minor participant completing a survey on-line after recruiting participants in person.

1. A traditional, hard copy of the parental permission/consent form may be sent to or brought to the parent who will review and possibly sign it, if giving permission for a minor child to participate. This permission form will be returned to the researcher and the participant may complete the survey online with a computer provided by the researcher (such as at school).

2. A traditional, hard copy of the parental permission/consent form may be sent to or brought to parent for review. If the parent signs the form and returns it, the parent will be given a link for the minor participant to complete the on-line survey,
3. Parental consent may be obtained using valid electronic signatures and emailed to the researcher, after which the researcher can email the link to the parent for the online survey.
4. A copy of a signed permission document may be scanned and e-mailed back to the researcher, after which the researcher can email the link to the parent for the online survey.

If the recruiting of participants is going to be done online, it is recommended that an existing survey platform be utilized that can contact potential participants anonymously. It should have an informed consent embedded in the survey and that will restrict participants to those 18 years of age and older.