



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Informed Consent in Program Evaluations

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Informed consent is the voluntary agreement to participate in an evaluation. This is the process of ensuring participants are fully informed about the evaluation being conducted.

From this, participants can make a decision about their involvement in the evaluation. To be full informed means that participants are aware of the purpose of evaluation, what the evaluation will entail, how the findings will be used, and any risks involved.

When is Informed Consent Needed?

- Always!
- Start thinking about the process of attaining informed consent in the planning stages of your evaluation:
 - What types of information do you want to collect?
 - From whom?
 - How will you attain this information?

What types of Informed Consent are there? Who is required to provide Informed Consent?

- **Parental Consent** — Special consideration is needed when involving youth in evaluation. There is a legal requirement to attain consent from a parent/guardian who signs on behalf of a child who is under the age of 16.
- **Youth Assent** — After receiving parental consent, it is necessary to attain approval from the participant themselves. Attaining assent is when a child (ages 7 to 15) agrees to participate in the evaluation. The child should provide his/her assent and may refuse to participate even if the parent/guardian has provided their consent.
- **Consent** — Consent is required for adult participants over the age of 18 (e.g., program leader, mentor, volunteer) and youth participants over the age of 16 who are competent in making an informed decision of whether or not to participate in the evaluation.

What is the Best Way to Attain Informed Consent?

- **Written:** Practically speaking, attaining consent through an informed consent form or information letter is ideal as then there is concrete documentation of participants' acceptance or decline to be involved in the evaluation.

What Elements are Important to Include in a Consent Form?

- Purpose of the evaluation
- The evaluation process and procedure (i.e., specifically outlining what the youth will be asked to participate in)
- Length of time commitment for involvement in the evaluation
- Any foreseeable risks and discomfort to participants
- Benefits of the evaluation to participants, the program, and the greater community
- A statement outlining that participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the evaluation at any time without any consequences
- A statement regarding participants' right to confidentiality (e.g., using information in a way that ensures participants cannot be identified)
- Any compensation that participants may receive for participating in the evaluation (e.g., food, gift card, honorarium)
- Contact information for the individual facilitating the evaluation

Final Tips

- Avoid jargon; use language in the consent form that participants will understand
- Ensure informed consent is provided in a language that is accessible to your participants — if participants speak a language other than English, be sure to translate any documents so that participants are able to fully understand and be informed about the evaluation.
- Be proactive: Start the process of attaining informed consent early in the evaluation planning stage so that when it comes time to conduct your evaluation, your participants are informed and you are ready to proceed

- If compensation is provided to participants, ensure that what is provided is reasonable and reflective of the time and effort participants are asked to give
- Remember that participants' confidentiality must be upheld when presenting the results. The program evaluation is responsible for upholding informed consent and the confidentiality agreement. For example, when presenting qualitative data in a report or on a website, no identifying information can be presented with the participants' quotations. When presenting quantitative results, findings should be reported as group means or differences— all names should be removed so that the data is presented anonymously.

Useful Links/Want to Learn More?

Visit the links below to learn more about Informed Consent in Program Evaluations

- [Community Research Ethics Office](#)
- [Government of Canada's online tutorial—Tri-Council Policy Statement \(TCPS\) 2: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#)
- [Guidelines for Research Involving Inuit](#)
- [Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health's 'Doing the right thing: Ethical considerations when conducting program evaluation'](#)
- [Health Canada's Sample Parent/Guardian's Consent Form for Participants Under 16 Years of Age](#)