Parent Permission and Child Assent

This guidance document is intended for Researchers who plan to conduct research involving children as subjects. It is adapted from the CPHS (Committee for Protection of Human Subjects) Guidelines on Parent Permission and Child Assent (University of California at Berkeley, January 21, 2019).

Special ethical and regulatory considerations apply when research involves children as subjects. Children are inherently more vulnerable than adults, requiring a higher level of protection, and are also legally incapable of giving valid informed consent. Thus, the HSC must assure that adequate provisions are made regarding assent of the child and permission of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

Issues related to child assent and parent permission are listed below. If the research involves children, Researchers should submit the Parent Permission and Child Assent form with their HSR application. In reviewing such studies, the HSC will apply the requirements found in federal regulations 45 CFR 46, Subpart D, "Additional Protections for Children Involved as Subjects in Research." <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/guidance/special-protections-for-children/index.html>

Definitions:

1. Children are “persons who have not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research, under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted.”
2. Assent means “a child’s affirmative agreement to participate in research. Mere failure to object should not, absent affirmative agreement, be construed as assent.”
3. Permission means “the agreement of parent(s) guardian to the participation of their child or ward in research.
4. Parent means “a child’s biological or adoptive parent.”
5. Guardian means “an individual who is authorized under applicable State or local law to consent on behalf of a child to general medical care.”

Child Assent:

The process of asking a child to participate in research should be carefully planned and implemented, using age-appropriate language and methods, for any child who is considered capable of understanding and providing assent. This process should include a clear explanation (verbally, and inwritten form when applicable) that conveys:

- what the study is about;
- why the child is eligible/being invited to participate in the study;
- procedures the child will be expected to take part in;
- potential risks and/or discomforts to the child;
- potential benefits to the child or society;
- that the child is completely free to choose whether or not to participate, and may withdraw at any time without negative consequences;
• an invitation to ask questions at any time; and
• names and contact information (phone numbers, email addresses) of whom to contact with questions

Parent Permission:
The parent(s) play a vital part in the consent process for research involving their child. The Researcher should make every effort to assure that both the parents and child understand the research, and their respective rights, as thoroughly as possible. This includes conveying to parents that they should respect their child’s autonomy in this regard (e.g., not exert overt or implied pressure for the child to participate, not indicate anger or disappointment if the child wishes to decline or withdraw from the study). Usually, the parent(s) must be provided with a permission form that meets all requirements for adult consent but is written to refer to the subject as “your child” instead of “you.”

Checklist:

1. Plain and clear language. Easy to follow and understandable by research subjects.
2. Clear identifying information:
   a. Name of researcher(s), institution (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary), and supervising faculty.
   b. Contact information.
3. Succinct explanation of the purpose of the research and why the person is being invited to participate.
4. Succinct explanation of the procedure/process of the research.
5. Explicit indication of time required for participation.
6. Statement about voluntary nature of participation, and how subjects may withdraw from the study or decline participation in specific parts of the study without negative consequences.
7. Statement about potential risks and benefits of the research based on Research Risk Assessment Rubric. It should be honest and instructive, but not unhelpfully alarmist (e.g., “you may experience pain”).
8. As appropriate, offer resources or remedies for those adversely affected by the risks of the project, such as access to a counselor.
9. Statement explaining how you will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research. (Subjects may be invited to choose their own pseudonyms.)
10. Statement about mandatory reporting, explaining that you will break confidentiality if a participant discloses potential abuse or harm about themselves or others.
11. Indicate how data will be stored securely, how long it will be kept, and what will happen to it after the designated hold period. (In keeping with federal regulations, G-ETS policy states: “Research investigators are responsible for retention of research files and informed consent documents for at least three years after completion of the research activity.”)
12. Explanation of how the results will be shared.
13. Statement about the publication of research data. (If applicable, mention possible usage of research data for other publications in the future.)
14. A simple statement of consent. The statement should include all ways in which participants will have **data collected** from them (e.g., notes taken during interviews, audio recording, video recording).

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**PARENT PERMISSION**

If you decide that your child* may participate in this study, *please sign and date below*. We will give you a copy of this form to keep for future reference.

___________________________________
*Child Participant Name (*please print*)

_____________________________     ________________
Parent/Guardian's Name (*please print*)     Date

_____________________________     ________________
Parent/Guardian's Signature     Date

*[If both parents are required to sign, add second set of signature and date lines here.]*
*[Participant gets a copy. Researcher keeps original.]*