**Guidance and Templates for Subject Recruitment**

For research involving human subjects, the Institutional Review Board must approve all recruitment plans and advertisements (including brochures, flyers, letters, social media posts, etc.) prior to use. This document describes the basic parameters that the KSU IRB follows when reviewing materials and plans for subject recruitment. It also provides templates.

The templates (located at the end of the document) are designed to help investigators ensure that they are meeting standards that are consistent with federal regulations and best practices. The IRB understands that recruitment strategy and methodology vary greatly from study to study. As such, you are welcome to customize the templates to fit your needs, providing they abide to the following standards and do not include images or text that may be overly enticing, coercive, or misleading.

**Basic Standards**

The following information should be included in the recruitment materials:

* name of researcher, contact information, and institution name
  + KSU logos and university style guides can be found at: <https://www.kent.edu/ucm/guide-marketing>
* title and purpose of the project and disclosure that the project is for research
* inclusion/exclusion criteria in summary form
* brief list (or summary) of procedures
* time commitment
* potential compensation
* NEW – statement that the project is IRB-approved
* additional guidelines:
  + should not emphasize monetary compensation
  + should not use catchy words such as “free” or “exciting” or overly enticing graphics
  + should have a script that accurately reflects the study
  + should have proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation

**Recruitment Using Social Media**

If you plan to recruit via social media, caution must be taken to preserve participant privacy. You must submit a description of your plans (i.e., platforms, frequency of posting, and process of corresponding) and copies of the exact text (including pictures) proposed for use during recruitment. Recruitment strategies using social media platforms should, whenever possible, use the basic standards provided in this document. To help ensure privacy and that potential participants are fully informed about the study, the IRB typically requires that initial posts on social media link users to the site that contains more detailed information about the study (consent form, eligibility requirements, etc.). Other helpful tips include:

* The IRB does not endorse posting directly/publicly to any individual or organization’s social media account without prior authorization. When posting to an organization’s account, you should seek permission from the organization first.
* To help with privacy, the IRB does not typically endorse the use of social media as a form of two-way communication.
* Always understand the platform’s terms of use and privacy practices.
* Do not use your private social media account.
* Additional guidance on online research can be found at:

<https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/ohrp/sachrp/mtgings/2013%20March%20Mtg/internet_research.pdf>

**Using Qualtrics**

Investigators collecting survey data via Qualtrics sometimes choose to send recruitment emails directly from their Qualtrics account. Please keep in mind that all of the basic standards apply to these recruitment emails and that there are some additional best practices that you should keep in mind so that your recruitment email does not look like a phishing attempt. To reduce the likelihood of this happening, please review the following bullet points, which include recommendations from the IRB and IT Security:

* Greetings and salutation should not be generic when possible. In some cases, you can use piped text to address individuals within a group by name (see the Qualtrics knowledge base below).
* The Kent State logo should be used.
* The email address should match the PI’s email address, so avoid using generic email addresses such as [noreply@qemailserver.com](mailto:noreply@qemailserver.com).
  + Email systems that limit mass emailing may reject “generic” addresses.
* Compensation should not be heavily emphasized. Phishing attempts often promise financial gains.
* Slight grammatical errors or unusual spacing are typical of phishing attempts.
* Always offer the survey’s full URL.
* The Qualtrics knowledge base offers many tips and solutions: <https://www.qualtrics.com/support/>.
* More information about phishing can be found at: <https://www.kent.edu/is/secureit>.
* In some cases, it may be more effective to use your @kent.edu account to email an anonymous or personal link that is available in the Qualtrics Distribution tab.

**QR Codes**

QR codes can be easily created in Qualtrics. QR codes can be used to link to surveys, scheduling systems, or a more detailed description of a study, and can be added to recruitment letters or flyers. In general, the use of QR codes should be limited to minimal risk research.

**Snowball Recruitment**

Snowball recruitment is a process where existing study subjects recruit among their acquaintances and mostly occurs in one of two ways:

1. Participants are asked to share their acquaintance’s contact information with the investigator. The investigator then contacts the acquaintance.
2. The participant provides the investigator’s contact information to their acquaintance. If interested, the acquaintance contacts the investigator.

The IRB prefers the second method. This method reduces the appearance of coercion and helps to preserve an individual’s privacy and confidentiality. Any materials used to support snowball recruitment should be included in the IRB application. When developing written materials concerning sensitive topics, discretion should be used to avoid violating privacy.

Also, current participants cannot be incentivized or compensated for assisting with recruitment.

# “Passive” Consent as a Method of Recruitment

Unless specifically approved by the IRB, an investigator should not invite the participation of potential subjects by a method that requires the subject to respond (by telephone, email, etc.) only if he or she does **not** wish to participate. Subjects may become unwitting participants if they never receive the communication or don’t understand it. This method of recruitment also raises privacy concerns for some types of research (e.g., private or sensitive topics). *For non-exempt research,* *IRB only approves “passive” procedures if the federal criteria for waiving informed consent are met.*

**Pre-Screening of Potential Subjects Who Contact You in Response to an Advertisement**

Pre-screening of potential subjects to determine initial eligibility and interest in a study is considered part of the recruitment process and therefore requires IRB review. The IRB should assure the procedures adequately protect the rights and welfare of prospective subjects.

Pre-screening with interested candidates may be done in person, over the phone (see telephone script), or online. The IRB application must indicate if the recruitment screening information provided by the potential subject will be retained–additional requirements apply.

**Brief Statement Typically Used for Exempt/Level I Research and Some Other Minimal Risk Research**

Study Title:

Principal Investigator Name:

You are being invited to participate in a research study about (*topic*) that is being conducted by (*name*) at Kent State University. This study has been approved by the Kent State University IRB.

Participation is (*confidential/anonymous*) and involves (*taking a survey, participating in an interview, etc.*) that will take (*number*) minutes.

***As needed, include other relevant information that may include risks or inclusion criteria.***

***Add a statement about compensation (if any) and OTHER APPLICABLE INSTRUCTIONS (i.e., “click on the link below to participate”).***

Thank you for your time, and if you have any questions, feel free to contact me at *(email/phone).*

***Include a signature line with contact information.***

**Template – Telephone Script**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I’m calling from Kent State University about a research study. Am I speaking to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*name*)?

***If “no,” wait for the person to pick up or ask for a time to call back. You should only share the research topic with the potential participant or, when permissible, the person’s representative.***

***If “yes:”***

Is this a good time to talk? I expect this phone call will take about \_\_\_\_ minutes.

***Arrange to call at another time, if appropriate.***

I’m calling about a research study about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(*describe condition being studied*) called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*study title*). The purpose of this research study is to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*state study purpose*).

I’m calling (*to* *see if you are interested/to determine if you are eligible/because you signed up to be contacted*). If you want to participate, I will ask you some questions to see if you can be in the study. If it looks like you might be eligible, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*describe summary of procedures*).

Before we go on to the questions, let me tell you a little bit about your rights as a research subject.

You don’t have to answer any questions that you don’t want to, and you can choose to stop at any time without penalty. The main risk of answering my questions today is (*it may be a loss of confidentiality*). However, we will do our best to keep your information confidential by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*if necessary, describe measures to mitigate risk*).

If you have questions about the study, you can call us at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (*phone number*). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, you can call the KSU IRB at 330-672-2704.

May I go ahead with the eligibility questions?

***If “no,” thank the individual and end the call.***

***If “yes,” start the questions:***

* ***Potential first question that helps preserve privacy:*** I’m going to give you a list of things that would PROHIBIT you (*exclusion criteria*) from being in the study. Please do not indicate if these things apply to you until the end of the list. ***End the call if someone answers in the affirmative.*** …OR… (*list inclusion criteria*). ***End the call if someone answers in the******negative.***

***If eligible, move forward (add any remaining information to this script), if not thank them for their time.***

**Template – Recruitment Letter/Email**

(*Date*)

Re: (*Project Title*)

Dear: (*Name*)

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a voluntary research study about(*study topic*)*.* This study is being conducted by (*name of investigator/lab*) at Kent State University.

Participation includes (*brief description of procedures; include time commitment and compensation, if any. You may want to consider using bullet points for studies that include multiple procedures. You can include a link to a survey or consent form, or a more detailed description of your research in this section*)*.*

***Briefly* *describe inclusion/exclusion criteria*.**

***Explain any other relevant information, for example: will there be follow-up to this letter, are there special contact instructions, are there websites with additional information.***

If you would like additional information about this study, please contact us at (*contact information*).

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact us if you are interested in learning more about this Institutional Review Board-approved project.

(*PI Name*)

Principal Investigator

(*Title*)

Kent State University

**Template – Flyer**

**Weight Loss and Diabetes Prevention Research Study**

* **Are you between the ages of 13 and 21?**
* **Do you want to change your eating and exercise habits in order to lose weight?**

**If you answered yes to both of these questions**, you may be eligible to participate in an IRB-approved research project that is designed to compare the effectiveness of different diets and levels of exercise on weight loss and diabetes prevention. You will be asked to participate in food education and exercise classes, take a few brief surveys, and keep track of everything that you eat and how much you exercise for 30 days. You can earn up to $100 for your participation.

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| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |
| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |
| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |
| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |
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| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |
| Jane Doe | 555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com) |

Benefits include the opportunity to participate in food education and exercise classes.

If you would like to learn more, please contact Jane Doe at:

555-555-5555 or [research@email.com](mailto:research@email.com)