

Guide to Consent for Mail & Telephone Surveys

The consent process for mail surveys can be handled in more than one way. In the first way, the PI sends the subject a letter requesting participation; the letter is accompanied by a conventional consent form which the individual signs and returns with his/her survey. If the study is to be anonymous, the consent form is separated from the survey immediately upon opening the package. In the second way, the PI provides on the face page of the survey the information generally found in the consent form; also included there is a statement that by answering the questions and returning the survey, the subject is providing and documenting his/her consent. The PI annotates the survey to the effect informed consent was received.

For telephone surveys, the interviewer reads from a "script"* written on the survey document. The script contains a comprehensive, though succinct, description of the study and includes the relevant elements of informed consent - in narrative form. If the participant will be recorded, it must be stated. The interviewer solicits any questions the potential subject may have and answers them. The interviewer directly asks the person if he/she agrees to participate in the survey. Finally, the PI documents on a data sheet: (1) that the script was read; (2) the individual was offered the opportunity to ask questions; and (3) the individual agreed or declined to participate in the study.

If your project could elicit emotional or psychological issues in the subjects, you need to insert contact information for relevant support services in this consent. When possible, the listings need to be local and national. Please contact the IRB office if you have questions.

IRB contact information by me listed on mail surveys and read on telephone surveys. Questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, contact Alex Cohen, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/research.

Your information or biospecimens collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, may be used or distributed for future research.

_____ Yes, I give permission

_____ No, I do not give permission

* N.B. (The script must be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to its use in the study.)

