Sample Informed Consent Form for Research/Evaluation Projects

Voluntary informed consent is an essential safeguard of **human subjects research**. It is also a best practice when collecting data from clients in any context, including in the course of service delivery and program evaluation. The example consent form provided below is intended to serve as a starting point for developing your own informed consent form for a research or evaluation project. For more information on informed consent, including on how to ensure consent is truly voluntary, informed, and meaningful, see Switchboard's Obtaining Meaningful Informed Consent from Newcomers.

Important note: When your data collection meets the definition of human subjects research[1], it is a legal requirement to follow the federal regulations outlined in 45 CFR 46.116 and to seek approval from an Institutional Review Board, or IRB. Review these requirements in detail prior to beginning a research project.

This sample consent form relates to data collection from competent **adults.** Additional considerations are needed when seeking assent (affirmative agreement to participate) from **minors** or consent from adults who are unable to provide informed consent without assistance (such as those with intellectual disabilities or those living in institutionalized settings).

Prior to using this form, you will need to modify it for your project and remove references to the fictional organization mentioned. You should always adapt the language in a consent form to make sure it is easily understood by the population you intend to include as participants. On Page 3, you will find a sample modification that may be used to adapt this form when seeking oral or verbal consent.

The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

[1] The National Institutes of Health states that, according to 45 CFR 46, a human subject is "a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research:

- Obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or
- Obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens."

The Impact of Extended Case Management for Refugees in the United States: A Comparative Study

Informed Consent for Survey Participation

Purpose of the Study

The organization Helping Hands, with funding from [*donor name*], is conducting a research study on how refugees adjust to life in the United States. The purpose of the research is to understand how Helping Hands can provide better case management services to help refugees rebuild their lives more quickly and successfully. The research will include a survey of around 100 adult refugees who arrived in Greenville and Middletown between January 202X and June 202X.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

The research will begin in early 202X and we expect that you will be surveyed four different times over approximately three years. The survey questions will be about your experience adjusting to life in the US. They will include questions about access to health, education, and other services; employment; housing; and community relationships. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer and may exit the interview at any time.

We plan to hold the survey interviews in your home. If you prefer, we can also conduct surveys in a private space in the Helping Hands office. Each survey interview will last for no more than one hour.

Eligibility

You may participate if you are 18 years or older and you arrived in Greenville or Middletown as a refugee between January 202X and June 202X.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can decide to stop participating in the study at any time. Your decision to participate, or to stop participating at a later time, will not affect any services or benefits that you receive from Helping Hands or any other agency.

Risks and Discomforts

Risks of participating are expected to be minimal. You may experience mild discomfort when responding to questions. You may skip any question you prefer not to answer or stop the interview at any time. The trained interviewer can refer you to staff at Helping Hands to ensure that you receive appropriate support if you experience discomfort. While data will be stored securely and access to any personal information will be limited, a data breach could expose personal information collected for the purposes of this project.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, we expect that the results of the research will allow Helping Hands to improve services for refugees that arrive in future.

Incentives

In appreciation for the time that you take to respond to the survey, the research team will offer you a $25 gift card for each completed survey interview.

Confidentiality

The answers that you give will be used only for this research project. Your answers will be confidential. Your responses will not be linked to your name or any identifying information about you. We will not share your answers with any other organization, or with any of your family members, friends, or community leaders. To help keep track of study participants, we have assigned you a unique identification number. We will not put your name on your research documents and we will use this number instead. Only members of the research team will see your responses to the survey questions. Data will be stored securely on approved Helping Hands systems and analyzed in aggregated form. No individual-level data will be shared.

Use of Administrative Data

If you agree to participate in this study, Helping Hands will use information that has been collected previously from you, related to your background, your family characteristics, and services that you have received from our agency. We will keep this information confidential.

Rights

By participating in this research, you are *not* giving up any of your rights.

Contact

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact [*name and position of local contact person*] at [*local phone number*] or [*email address, if respondent population has regular access to email*]. You can also contact this number with any complaints or concerns about the study or the way it is conducted. If you have any specific questions about your personal case, we can make you an appointment with the appropriate Helping Hands staff.

Informed Consent:

Enumerator Name (Printed):	_____	Respondent Name (Printed):	_____
Enumerator Signature:	_____	Respondent Signature:	_____
Date:	_____	Date:	_____

Modification for Oral Consent

While written, signed consent is generally preferable,* oral or verbal consent may be obtained in some cases. When seeking oral consent, the researcher reads the consent form aloud and discusses it with the participant, then indicates in writing whether the participant verbally consents. When consent is being obtained in this way, it is especially important to provide adequate time and opportunity for participants to ask questions.

Important note: Refer to 45 CFR 46.117(c) for regulations on waiving the requirement for obtaining signed consent when conducting human subjects research.

The example below modifies only the final sections of the form above. However, if intended to be read aloud, the entire consent form should be designed with this in mind. For example, you may include deliberate pauses in the script, to allow potential participants to absorb the information presented and ask any questions they may have.

**An exception is when you are not collecting identifying information elsewhere in the project. Oral consent may then be preferable because it does not involve recording names, minimizing risk.*

Informed Consent:

Do you have any questions for me?	❑ No **Continue**	❑ Yes **Answer questions**
Do you agree to participate in the study?	❑ No **Politely thank them and end the conversation**	❑ Yes **Continue**

Enumerator Confirmation:

I, the undersigned enumerator (printed name) _____, certify that I have explained the content of this form to the respondent (printed name) _____, that I have answered any questions he/she has asked me by providing all relevant information, and that I have informed the respondent of his/her freedom to revoke his/her agreement to participate in this study at any time. I confirm that the respondent has understood the contents of this consent form and agrees to participate in this study. I confirm that I will respect the objectives and ethical guidelines of this study, and that I will maintain strict confidentiality.

Signature of enumerator: _____

Signed at (location) _____, on (date) _____.