Things to Consider with Human Subjects and Photovoice

Photovoice (also called photo elicitation interviewing) is a method of qualitative research wherein participants are asked to take photos of things that represent a certain experience or topic related to the research. The researcher will ask participants to take pictures of ___. After the pictures are taken, the researcher and the participant discuss the photos together so the researcher fully understands the pictures and intent behind the photo.

• Discuss whether you are providing the cameras or if participants will use their own.

• Decide what the guidelines will be for the photos.
  o Will pictures of other people be allowed, what might be captured on film (think about illegal activity, private settings, etc.)
  o How will you communicate these guidelines to participants?
  o This sets the tone and expectations for participants as far as the content of the pictures being taken

• How will you have the photos developed? And how will they get from participant to you?

• How will you have the cameras and photos labeled?

• Will you need to consent people who appear in the photos?

• What might be the impact on the participant of taking photos? What might be the impact of any photos taken of third parties?
  o Are there any risks related to the photos?
  o If so, how do you plan to minimize those risks?

• What kind of training will the participants have to go through in order to be ready to implement this type of research?

• Will you need your participants to sign some sort of ethical agreement regarding how to take the photos?

• Neither the participant nor third parties in the photos may waive their rights to the photos (commonly referred to as a “release”). Instead of using “release” language in agreements or forms, ask permission to take and use photos.

* Here is a helpful resource: www.photovoice.org/images/uploads/pvethicalpractice.pdf