Things to Consider with Human Subjects and Interviews

• What is the content of the interview and what types of risk are associated with it?
  o If the data from the interview were posted in the News and Observer, would the participant be at professional, personal, financial, social (etc) risk?
  o Risks are not only associated with published data; risks are also incurred from inadvertent breach of confidentiality wherein full raw data are viewed by an unauthorized party.
  o Be aware of incidental risks. Risks are not only related to the intent of the research, but more about the impact of participants’ responses. If something goes wrong and confidentiality is breached, information provided by participants could reflect poorly upon them.

• Consider where the interview is taking place.
  o Depending on the context and topic of your focus group, be aware of the risk of “outing” participants by advertising for the interviews and then holding interviews in a location where participants would be viewed interacting with you.
    ▪ For example, if you actively recruit at a school for teachers who are thinking about quitting, and then hold all interviews on a Tuesday afternoon in a certain room at the school, those teachers who are seen entering the room would be known as thinking about quitting.

• How will you approach potential participants and let them know you want to interview them?

• Do the questions you ask participants, ask about other people? If so, think about the third party and what considerations need to be made. Are they at risk? Would they need to be consented?

• Inform all participants in the informed consent and in preliminary focus group instructions if they will be audio/video-recorded or observed by outside observers

• Things to include in your IRB submission about the interviews
  o Describe the information you are including in the recruitment materials (provide email transcripts, phone scripts and flyers etc.)
  o If e-mailing for recruitment, whose information is in the "From" section
  o If audio or video-recording the interview, discuss how do you plan on storing the data, transferring the data, transcribing the data, destroying the data.
  o If assigning codes or pseudonyms, when in this process is this happening.
    ▪ Will you transcribe identifying information out or will you not record identifiers (including third party names and other locations) from the get-go
o Are you planning on member-checking? If so, how are you getting the transcripts to and from the participant?
  ▪ We suggest stripping the transcript of all identifiers and sending it to the participant in an e-mail with a generic body so that no one can identify who the participant is in the transcript
  ▪ Make sure to include member checking activities in the consent form

o Are you asking the participant to bring items to the interview? If so, talk about that and discuss what and why.

o Make sure to note number of participants, number of focus groups, and length of each focus group.

o Describe how you will contact and follow up with participants

o Will any services, resources, or counsel be available should the participants need it?
  ▪ Ex: crisis hotline, trained individual on call, referrals

o What does compensation look like?

* Each study is different and there may be special considerations unique to your study not included here. Please make sure to discuss those.

  • If implementing a focus group outside of the US or with special populations within the US, you must take special care with the customs, laws, and practices of that group. This may include seeking permission from leaders within that group, paying attention to gender lines etc.