

GUIDANCE NOTES ON RESEARCH RECRUITMENT

INTRODUCTION

As stated in the [Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans \(TCPS 2\)](#), “the approach to recruitment is an important element in assuring voluntariness” of research participants. Researchers must demonstrate to the REB how their study adheres to the principle of voluntariness. This guidance note is intended to provide general guidance on the submission requirements and process for initial ethical review for research involving humans at Fraser Health with respect to research recruitment.

GUIDANCE NOTE #1: REQUIRED INFORMATION

All methods of recruitment of potential participants for prospective research must be detailed in the application form, including:

- How potential participants will be identified,
- How contact information will be obtained for potential participants,
- Who will initiate contact with the potential participants,
- How and when potential participants will be initially contacted,
- The relationship, if any, of the study team members to potential participants (e.g., treating clinician, instructor, etc.),
- What recruitment materials (e.g., advertisements, posters, letters, etc.) will be used.

For retrospective research using secondary records, the specific details of how the records will be identified and selected for the study should be included in the protocol/proposal.

All research recruitment methods, procedures, and documents must be approved by the REB prior to implementation.

GUIDANCE NOTE #2: ENSURING RECRUITMENT IS FREE FROM UNDUE INFLUENCE

In order to uphold the principle of voluntariness, it is important for research recruitment to be free from undue influence or coercion. Undue influence may arise when there are power imbalances between the researcher and the prospective participant, such as when prospective participants are recruited by individuals in a position of authority, power, trust, or dependency over them ([TCPS 2](#)), e.g., a treating physician recruiting patients under their care, instructors recruiting students in their classroom, etc.

Coercion refers to “a more extreme form of undue influence, involving a threat of harm or punishment for failure to participate” ([TCPS2](#)).

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure the principle of voluntariness is upheld.

2.1 Patient/Client Recruitment by Health Care Providers

Initial contact with a patient/client to introduce the research study should be done by a person within their circle of care. However, the REB recommends this not be the treating physician/direct care provider, where possible. If the requirements of the study design make it necessary for a treating physician/direct care provider to introduce the study, the researcher must describe the measures that will be taken to mitigate against any undue influence.

The REB considers study nurses/research coordinators at specialized medical clinics to be within the circle of care for patients/clients within those clinics.

GUIDANCE NOTE #3: OBTAINING CONTACT INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS FROM SECONDARY RECORDS

The [BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FolPPA\)](#) serves to make public bodies more accountable to the public and protect personal privacy. This applies to public sector institutions, including Fraser Health. [Section 35](#) of the Act limits the use of information collected by public bodies for research purpose, such that it cannot be disclosed for the purposes of contacting a person to participate in the research.

Contact information for patients/clients held in medical records by Fraser Health may not be used for the purpose of recruiting for research project unless prior consent to contact has been obtained, or special exemption from the BC Privacy Commissioner has been granted for this purpose.

3.1 Fraser Health Consent to Contact Database

The Fraser Health Department of Evaluation and Research Services maintains a [Consent to Contact database](#) of patients/clients of Fraser Health who have provided consent to be contacted for current or future research opportunities in Fraser Health. As a means to improve participant recruitment in research, the Consent to Contact database may be accessed by researchers who are employees and/or privileged physicians of Fraser Health. The use of the [Fraser Health Consent to Contact](#) database must be detailed in the study protocol/proposal.

3.2 Information Held by Disease Specific Registries

Participants who have previously consented to be included in a research registry, which included consent for contact for future research, must be initially contacted by mail using the contact information held in the registry. The letter must explain to the participants the purpose of the study and how their contact information was obtained. This letter must be submitted to the REB for approval.

3.3 The Fraser Health Global Outlook Email List

Identifying and contacting prospective participants for research recruitment using the Fraser Health Global Outlook email list is not permitted. Fraser Health employees with managerial responsibilities may use email to notify their department or unit that a research study may be conducted in their department/unit. The email text/script used for this purpose should be submitted to the REB for review. Care should be taken to ensure the voluntary nature of participation, such as including a statement that the decision whether to participate will be no consequences to employment. Potential participants should be instructed to contact the researchers directly should they have interest in participating.

GUIDANCE NOTE #4: THIRD PARTY RECRUITMENT AND SNOWBALL SAMPLING

Recruitment strategies in which contact information for potential participants is obtained by third parties (such as other study participants) and given directly to the researchers, poses a number of ethical challenges. It is generally preferable for third parties to distribute a study information/invitation letter to other potential participants so that these potential participants may contact the researchers directly if interested.

GUIDANCE NOTE #5: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

All recruitment materials must be submitted for REB approval prior to use. Recruitment materials should provide potential participants with the study title, a description of the study purpose, what is expected of participants (including the time commitment), and the general eligibility criteria for the research. The Fraser Health logo should be included on all recruitment documents.

Remuneration/payment information should not be included on the recruitment materials.

All recruitment materials must include a version number and date.