

**UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS PROGRAM**

**INVESTIGATOR GUIDANCE DOCUMENT : MODEL TELEPHONE CONSENT**

Obtaining informed consent from a research prospect in a study using telephone interviews presents special challenges. As in other efforts to obtain informed consent, the disclosure should include all the elements outlined in the governing regulations and should provide such information in as simple terms as possible. Reading a disclosure over the telephone to a prospective participant, however, suffers from some disadvantages and is harder in many ways than presenting a prospect with a written document and explaining the study in person. For example, if it is too long, too detailed, or too difficult to follow, the prospect contacted by telephone may decide to end the conversation before consent can be obtained or otherwise decline to participate. Nevertheless, a researcher must obtain informed consent from a human participant before a study can begin. The following sample statement is designed to provide the required information to prospective participants without overwhelming them into a decision not to participate in the study. Of course, this statement must be modified to fit the particulars of each study, most notably in the areas that describe the nature of the research, the risks of participation, and any assurance of confidentiality. (NOTE: Reconsenting or re-verifying consent may be needed if participants are interviewed more than once, the interview is long, the topic is sensitive, or participants are infirm.)

*I am calling in regard to a research study being conducted at the University of Alabama<sup>1</sup>. Your telephone number was selected at random from a list of telephone numbers of residents of Jefferson County. This research study examines how people feel about sexually transmitted infections<sup>2</sup>. I would like to ask you some questions about this topic<sup>3</sup>, which will take about 15 minutes of your time<sup>4</sup>. None of these questions will ask you about personal matters and your answers will be kept confidential<sup>5</sup>. Your participation will help provide better health care in this state<sup>6</sup> with the only risk being that some of the questions may make you feel uncomfortable<sup>7</sup>. However, answering these questions is voluntary. That means you may refuse to take part in this study or, if you decide to participate in the study, you may decide not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or to stop the interview at any time<sup>8</sup>. May I ask the first question?*

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<sup>1</sup> A statement that the study involves research.

<sup>2</sup> An explanation of the purposes of the research.

<sup>3</sup> A description of the procedures to be followed.

<sup>4</sup> The expected duration of the subject's participation.

<sup>5</sup> A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.

<sup>6</sup> A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research.

<sup>7</sup> A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.

<sup>8</sup> A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.