

# Informed Consent and the Research Subject Policy

## Scope

Mayo Clinic Human Research Protection Program

Research for which the Mayo Clinic is the IRB of Record

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to investigators regarding the informed consent process for research subjects.

## Table of Contents

[Policy](#)

[Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process](#)

[Waiver of Documentation of Consent](#)

[Consent Process Plan](#)

[Recruitment Plan](#)

[Recruitment Materials Posted on Websites](#)

[Individual or Institutional Recruitment Incentives](#)

[Payment/Reimbursement of Research Subjects](#)

[Use of Social Media for Recruitment](#)

[Enrollment Plan](#)

[Non-English Speaking Prospective Subjects](#)

[Guidelines for the Use of Interpreters](#)

[IRB Submission and Review](#)

[After IRB Approval](#)

[Participation](#)

[Investigator Responsibilities - Study Completion and Last Contact](#)

[Documentation of Consent](#)

[Digital Signature Capture](#)

[Electronic Informed Consent](#)

[Consent Forms and the Subject's Medical Record](#)

[Study Record Retention Requirements \(Investigator\)](#)

[Subject Withdrawal and Data Retention](#)

[Definitions](#)

Federal Requirements: [45 CFR 46.116](#), [45 CFR 46.117](#), and [21 CFR 50.25](#)

[Return to index](#)

## Policy

It is the policy of the Mayo Clinic Office for Human Research Protection Institutional Review Board (IRB) that investigators will not involve human beings as subjects in research unless the investigator has obtained the [legally effective informed consent](#) of the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. Exception to this policy requires that the IRB grant a [waiver of the informed consent requirement](#).

Unless waived by the IRB, consent will be documented by the use of an approved, written consent form. The form will be signed and dated (including the time) by the prospective subject or the prospective subject's legally authorized representative. Note: research personnel may not fill in the date and time.

The consent document will include the basic elements of informed consent as specified in 45 CFR 46.116 - *General Requirements for Informed Consent* and 21 CFR 50.25 - *Elements of Informed Consent*.

An investigator will seek informed consent only under circumstances that provide the prospective subject or, when approved by the IRB, the subject's legally authorized representative sufficient opportunity to understand and consider whether or not to participate and that minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence.

The information that is given to the subject or the representative will be in language understandable to the subject or the representative.

No informed consent, whether oral or written, will include any exculpatory language through which the subject or their legally authorized representative is made to waive or appear to waive any of the subject's legal rights, or releases or appears to release the investigator, the sponsor, the institution or its agents from liability for negligence.

[Return to index](#)

## Waiver or Alteration of the Consent Process

**The provisions for waiver of informed consent do not apply to FDA regulated research involving human subjects.**

- An IRB may approve a consent procedure which does not include, or which alters, some or all of the elements of informed consent set forth above, or waive the requirement to obtain informed consent provided the IRB finds and documents that:
  - The research or demonstration project is to be conducted by or subject to the approval of state or local government officials and is designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs; and
  - The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration.
- An IRB may approve a consent procedure which does not include, or which alters some or all of the elements of informed consent, or waive the requirement to obtain informed consent provided the IRB finds and documents that:
  - The research involves no more than [minimal risk](#) to the subjects;

- The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects;
- The research could not be practicably carried out without the waiver or alteration; and
- Where appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation. (45 CFR 46.116)

[Return to index](#)

## **Waiver of Documentation of Consent**

**The provisions for waiver of documentation of informed consent do not apply to FDA regulated research involving human subjects.**

The IRB will review the research proposal to determine if waiver of documentation of informed consent is appropriate. The IRB may waive the requirement for an investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds that either:

- The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent form and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or
- That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.
- In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research.
- When the IRB considers waiving the requirement to obtain written documentation of consent, the IRB reviews a written description of the information that will be provided to subjects via an oral consent script, contact letter, phone script or similar document.
- If a waiver of written consent is granted by the IRB, the IRB will determine whether the investigator must document the oral consent in research study files and/or the subject's medical record.

[Return to index](#)

## **Consent Process Plan**

The investigator will develop a detailed consent process plan for the initial research proposal submission to the IRB. The following factors should be assessed and used to develop the plan:

- Type of research project being conducted, for example, biomedical research, behavioral/social science research, health services research.
- Risk to subjects, including procedures, devices, drugs, or biologics.
- Vulnerable categories of subjects, for example children; adults lacking decision-making capacity; prisoners; pregnant women and fetuses; persons who are non-

English speaking, economically or educationally disadvantaged, terminally ill, or students or employees of the organization.

- Characteristics of subjects such as age or health status that may influence health literacy and the consenting process.
- A plan for informing subjects of significant or incidental findings resulting from the research.

The plan must include a description of the following:

- Recruitment and advertising activities.
- Payment arrangement, if any.
- The method(s) for obtaining informed consent, including where or how communication will take place.
- The amount of time planned for the consent process.
- Method(s) for assessment of a subject's capacity to consent.
- The protections that are planned to reduce potential subject's vulnerability to coercion or undue influence during the consenting process.
- The waiting period between discussion, decision, and enrollment.
- Study team members who will meet with the prospective subject and obtain informed consent. These individuals must be sufficiently trained, knowledgeable about the research project in order to answer questions posed by the subject, and must have IRB approval to obtain consent.
- If the investigator has a preexisting relationship with a prospective subject, the responsibility for the consent process will be delegated to another qualified member of the study team to avoid the possibility of undue influence to participate in the research.

[Return to index](#)

## **Recruitment Plan**

To assist in the development of recruitment plans and recruitment and advertisement materials, Mayo Clinic investigators may contact the Center for Clinical and Translational Science, Service Center, Communications Coordinator-Research Recruitment (507) 255-1943 or internal (77) 5-1943. All recruitment materials used by Mayo Clinic investigators must meet the Brand Standards of Mayo Clinic.

<http://intranet.mayo.edu/charlie/brand-standards/>

The investigator will:

- Provide a recruitment plan in the project proposal, including a description of the proposed recruitment method(s), advertisements, and if applicable, any payment arrangements.
- Specify the maximum number of contacts that will be attempted to contact a prospective subject (i.e., number of telephone calls, voicemail messages, emails, letters, etc.).
- Describe the extra protections for prospective subject populations that may be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence.

- Describe the source of prospective subjects.
- Ensure that recruitment methods, advertisements, payment arrangements are not misleading, inaccurate, exculpatory, or violate the equitable selection of subjects; and do not place prospective subjects at risk of coercion or undue influence.
- Ensure that subject privacy and confidentiality are protected.
- Consider a prospective subject's stress level or health status.
- Consider the timing of recruitment discussions with a prospective subject, for example, in relation to a subject receiving a diagnosis and ensure the readiness of a prospective subject to understand information being discussed.

The investigator will submit copies of the following recruitment information, including advertisements or payment arrangements to the IRB for review:

- Printed materials, such as flyers, posters, brochures, postcards.
- Media advertisements such as newspapers, television, radio, and internet website postings.
- If advertisements will be taped for broadcast, investigators should submit a copy of the audio/video tape or the text / script for review.
- If final copies of recruitment or advertising materials are not available at the time of initial IRB submission, draft versions may be submitted. When the final copy becomes available, it must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval to confirm the wording is appropriate and clearly reflects the intent of the research.
- Recruitment letters, phone or e-mail scripts.
- Telephone call scripts.
- Direct advertising intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
- Payment arrangements, if applicable.

Required content of recruitment/advertisement materials:

- Name and address of the investigator and research facility.
- The purpose of the research or the condition under study.
- A summary of the criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the research project.
- The person or office to contact for further information.
- The voluntary nature of participation.

Optional content of recruitment/advertisement materials:

- A brief list of prospective benefits and risks to subjects, if any.
- The estimated time or other commitment required of the subject.
- A statement that remuneration will be provided, without emphasis on the payment or amount.

Recruitment/advertisement materials should **not** contain:

- Claims of safety, equivalence or superiority to treatment.

- Phrases such as “new treatment”, “new medicine”, or “new drug”.
- The term “free” in reference to treatment procedures.
- Overestimations of benefits and underestimations of risks.
- Payment or the amount to be paid in large or bold type.

[Return to index](#)

## **Recruitment Materials Posted on Websites**

- IRB review and approval of listings of clinical trials on the internet is not required when the system format limits the descriptive information provided to basic trial information, such as: the title; purpose of the study; protocol summary; basic eligibility criteria; study site location(s); and how to contact the site for further information.
- Examples of clinical trial listing services that do not require prospective IRB approval include [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) and the Mayo Clinical Trials listing.
- Information exceeding the basic trial information, such as descriptions of clinical trial risks and potential benefits or solicitation of identifiable information, requires IRB review and approval before posting on websites.

## **Individual or Institutional Recruitment Incentives**

The following are prohibited:

- Payments to professionals in exchange for referrals of potential participants (“finder’s fees”).
- Payments designed to accelerate recruitment that are tied to the rate or timing of enrollment (“bonus payments”) unless they are judged not to interfere with providing prospective participants with sufficient opportunity to consider whether to participate and do not increase the possibility of coercion or undue influence on investigators or participants.

[Return to index](#)

## **Payment/Reimbursement of Research Subjects**

Research subjects may be paid, however the payment of participation is not considered a benefit, but rather a reimbursement for time and effort. All payments to subjects in research must be fair and equitable. Participation in a clinical trial offered by a sponsor may not include a coupon good for a discount on the purchase price of the product once it has been approved for marketing.

**Principle of Reasonable Compensation:** The IRB will review and determine the amount is reasonable and not so large as to unduly induce participation. All information concerning payment, including the amount and schedule of payment, should be clearly stated in the application and reflected in the consent documents. When the IRB evaluates the selection of subjects, it considers the influence of payments to subjects. While the federal regulations do not specifically state how much researchers should pay subjects or what that payment should look like, the IRB will apply a principle of reasonable compensation as it reviews subject payment for time, effort and inconvenience.

**Pro-Rated Payment and Bonuses:** Payment for participation in research should not be contingent upon the subject completing the entire study but rather be prorated as the study progresses to insure voluntary participation. While the entire payment should not be contingent upon completion of the entire study, payment of a small proportion as an incentive for completion of the study is acceptable providing that such an incentive is not coercive. If a bonus is given at the completion of the trial, it should not be more than one half of the total reimbursement.

### **Department of Defense - Recruitment and Payment**

When research involves U.S. military personnel, the additional protections to minimize undue influence for military research participants include:

- Officers are not permitted to influence the decisions of their subordinates.
- Officers and senior non-commissioned officers may not be present at the time of recruitment.
- Officers and senior non-commissioned officers have a separate opportunity to participate.
- When recruitment involves a percentage of a unit, an independent ombudsman is present.

When research involves U.S. military personnel, the limitations on dual compensation prohibit an individual from receiving pay of compensation for research during duty hours. An individual may be compensated for research if the participant is involved in the research when not on duty. Individuals may be compensated for blood draws for research up to \$50 for each blood draw.

[Return to index](#)

### **Use of Social Media for Recruitment**

Mayo Clinic investigators using social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) as a recruitment method must have the research reviewed and approved by the Mayo Clinic Public Affairs/Center for Social Media. For questions please call your local Public Affairs/Center for Social Media office.

- New projects proposing the use of social media as a recruitment method will contain a statement from the PI in either the IRBe application or the research project proposal that the use of social media for recruitment of research subjects has been reviewed and approved by the Mayo Clinic Public Affairs/Center for Social Media.
- Investigators at institutions for which the Mayo Clinic IRB is the IRB of record will include within the IRB application documentation of review and approval by the relying organization for the use of social media, or documentation that such review and approval is not required by the institution.

[Return to index](#)

### **Enrollment Plan**

When planning enrollment the Investigator must address the following:

- Amount of time needed for reading or reviewing the consent document
- Amount of time needed for the prospective subject to make a decision

- The location or methods of communicating and the related privacy needs for the initial and on-going discussions (e.g. in-person, mail, telephone)
- The need for including a medical interpreter, Legally Authorized Representative, family member(s), witness, or advocate who may need to be present and observe the discussions within the informed consent process.

[Return to index](#)

## **Non-English Speaking Prospective Subjects who are Not Specifically Targeted for the Research Project (see below for [targeted non-English speaking subjects](#))**

If enrollment of a prospective non-English speaking subject is considered when a research project does not specifically target this population, the investigator must:

- Have an independent medical interpreter provide an oral explanation (in person or by phone) of the entire content of the English version of the approved consent document to the prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative.
- In conjunction with the oral presentation, Mayo Clinic investigators will use the Mayo Clinic IRB's written Short Form / Authorization to Use and Disclose Protected Health Information form, stating that the elements of informed consent have been presented orally. The short form must be translated into a language understandable to the subject. Translated short forms in several different languages can be found on the IRB home page under the Forms and Procedures tab, Forms and Templates.
- There must be a witness to the oral presentation. The witness must be conversant in both the English language and the language of the prospective subject. The interpreter may serve as the witness.
- Mayo Clinic investigators will assure that the prospective subject or their representative has signed the translated Short Form/Authorization to Use and Disclose Protected Health Information form.
- Mayo Clinic investigators will assure that the witness has signed both the translated Short Form and a copy of the English consent document.
- Assure that the person obtaining consent has signed a copy of the English consent document.
- Mayo Clinic investigators will provide a copy of the translated Short Form to the prospective subject or the prospective subject's representative.
- A copy of the English consent document must be given to the prospective subject or the prospective subject's representative.

[Return to index](#)

## **Non-English Speaking Prospective Subjects who are Specifically Targeted for the Research Project**

If a research project targets non-English speaking persons of a specific language, then all printed study materials that are provided to the subject must be translated in that language and approved by the IRB prior to enrolling potential subjects.

- Submit English versions of the documents to the IRB for review and approval.
- Mayo Clinic investigators will send the final English versions, which have been approved by the IRB, to an external translation vendor or to Mayo Clinic Written Translation Services for translation for the intended targeted population. For questions regarding Mayo Clinic translation services, contact the Translation Coordinator at (77) 8-0372 or e-mail to [translation@mayo.edu](mailto:translation@mayo.edu).
- Investigators at institutions for which the Mayo Clinic IRB is the IRB of record will ensure translation of the documents by either an external translator or by using the translation services available within the relying institution and per institutional policy. Submit the translated documents to the IRB via the IRB electronic system together with the *Certificate of Authenticity* provided by the translation service.

[Return to index](#)

## **Guidelines for the Use of Interpreters**

- Mayo Clinic investigators will utilize a Mayo Clinic interpreter or Mayo-contracted telephone interpreter when obtaining informed consent for research from a non-English speaking prospective research subject or the subject's legally authorized representative.
- Investigators at institutions for which the Mayo Clinic IRB is the IRB of record will utilize the translation services available within the relying institution and per institutional policy.

This will assure complete, accurate, impartial, and confidential communication. Study staff designated to obtain consent and fluent in the language of the prospective research subject may also serve as interpreters.

Telephone interpreting is permissible when an interpreter is unavailable for a face-to-face encounter, unable to arrive within a reasonable amount of time, or when institutional translation services do not have an interpreter on staff for a requested language. Telephone interpreting is used as a back-up, not as a replacement for an in-person interpreter.

At Mayo Clinic, family members and friends may not serve as interpreters during the research consent process except in an emergency situation and only until an institutional or contracted telephone interpreter is available. However, adult family members or friends may serve as interpreters if the prospective research subject declines institutional interpreter services AND if the use of that person does not compromise the effectiveness of care or violate confidentiality. To ensure accuracy, the investigator should request that a Mayo Clinic interpreter be present when a family member or friend is interpreting.

Minor children may not serve as interpreters for the research consent process.

An interpreter contracted by the investigator for the purpose of a specific study may, with IRB approval, be utilized. Institutional approval, for example, by Mayo Clinic Language Services, may also be required.

- Mayo Clinic investigators may request an interpreter by contacting Mayo Clinic Language Services during office hours (below). After hours, contact the Mayo Clinic Operator.
  - Language Services

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 7:00 am – 6:00 pm

Phone: (77) 4-2741

<http://intranet.mayo.edu/charlie/international-services/rstintlcenter/>

- Mayo Clinic Institutional Policy
  - [Communication Assistance – PC.6](#)

[Return to index](#)

## **IRB Submission and Review**

The IRB reviews the application and attached documents including (but not limited to) the research protocol, consent forms, scripts and recruitment and advertising materials, and payment arrangements. The IRB:

- Determines whether the consent process is appropriate for the proposed research activities and if revisions to the consent process or document are necessary.
- Determines the amount of payment and the proposed method and timing of disbursement is neither coercive or presents undue influence.
- Reviews the proposed research project and determines that the consent document accurately reflects the purpose, risks, benefits and procedures, and payments as outlined in the research protocol and contains all the required elements of consent disclosure.
- Determines whether documentation of informed consent is appropriate for the proposed research activities, the subject population and the level of risk.
- Determines if revisions to the consent process or consent document are necessary.

The IRB will ensure that:

- The research project proposal and related materials (i.e. recruitment/advertisement materials, payments, consent documents, scripts) as submitted to the IRB via IRBe are approvable.
- Recruitment sites, recruitment methods, advertising materials and payment arrangements do not place subjects at risk of coercion or undue influence or cause inequitable selection.
- The consent process minimizes the possibility of coercion or undue influence and maximizes continued legally effective informed consent. When prospective subjects are vulnerable to coercion or undue influence due to their status, condition or situational vulnerability, the IRB review will ensure that the informed consent *process* is appropriate for that population.
- The consent document has the requisite regulatory and institutional information and is written in language that is understandable to the research project population.
- The consent documents accurately describe the risks and benefits initially approved by the IRB and at the time of research project modifications, continuing review, submission of reportable events or other safety-related information.

- Significant new findings or alterations to the risks and benefits that may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.

[Return to index](#)

## After IRB Approval

### Investigator Responsibilities - Enrollment

During the enrollment phase of a research project, the investigator:

- Adheres to the IRB-approved research project and uses the current IRB-approved consent form and consent process plan as approved by the IRB
- Ensures that delegated activities are performed by authorized and qualified staff as listed in the IRB application
- Submits all proposed research project modifications and revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to use
- Documents and retains consent records as directed by the IRB
- Reconsents subjects as directed by the IRB
- Assesses a prospective subject's physical and emotional state to determine his/her capacity for decision making
- Stops or reschedules the enrollment process if a prospective subject is unable to engage in the discussion or comprehend the research project information due to their physical or emotional state or if they appear reluctant or decline participation. The investigator (or their delegate) must never try to convince a prospective subject to participate in a research project
- Conducts the enrollment discussion with consideration given to the physical environment where enrollment activities will take place
  - Privacy and confidentiality issues may arise when enrollment activities take place in areas that are not private
  - Environments such as procedural rooms with multiple staff present or a waiting room lobby may introduce peer pressure, increase anxiety, foster intimidation, or present undue pressure to make an immediate decision
  - Waiting rooms with other patients nearby, exam rooms after being gowned, or patients lying on a gurney in a hallway are environmental conditions that must be avoided
- Avoids having the enrollment discussion immediately before surgery or clinical procedures or when prospective subjects are deprived of their glasses, hearing aids, clothing, or have been pre-medicated for a procedure
- Conducts a conversation regarding the research and the consent document with the prospective subject. The investigator (or their delegate) should:
  - Repeat important information to enhance subject recall
  - Use plain, nonmedical language whenever possible
  - Pause often for clarification, questions and answers
  - Spend time listening to the prospective subject

- Verbally reminds the prospective subject that their decision to participate or not participate will not affect their clinical care
- Provides private and ample time for the subject, their family members and/or their LAR to assess, evaluate, and discuss the information they have been given before asking them for their decision
- Discusses the research project in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to the research project population
  - Depending on the subject population, enrollment requirements may include a medical interpreter, witness, advocate, parent(s), spouse or a LAR to be present to support the subject, to communicate information, to ensure impartiality of the discussion, and to contribute to documentation of the prospective subject's decision
  - Non-English-speaking Prospective Subjects: An interpreter will be used for communication assistance whenever engaging a non-English speaking subject in the informed consent process, including the discussion and confirmation that the subject understands the consent document. See "[Guidelines for the Use of Interpreters](#)".
  - English-speaking, Illiterate Prospective Subjects: A person who speaks and understands English, but does not read and write, can be enrolled in a study by "making their mark" on the consent document. A person who can understand and comprehend spoken English, but is physically unable to talk or write, can be entered into a study if they are competent and able to indicate approval or disapproval by other means. If (1) the person retains the ability to understand the concepts of the study and evaluate the risk and benefit of being in the study when it is explained verbally (still competent) and (2) is able to indicate approval or disapproval to study entry, they may be entered into the study. The consent form should document the method used for communication with the prospective subject and the specific means by which the prospective subject communicated agreement to participate in the study. An impartial third party should witness the entire consent process and sign the consent document.

[Return to index](#)

## **Participation**

### **Investigator Responsibilities - Participation**

During the participation phase of a research project, it is the responsibility of the investigator (or their delegate) to:

- Take opportunities to increase or enhance a subject's understanding of the research project
- Provide opportunities for subjects to ask questions; confirm participation or withdraw from the research project
- Remind the subject that research project team contact information is provided in the consent document and may be used for research project related questions
- Provide the subject with a medical contact for clinical issues that may arise

- Keep research project team contact names and telephone numbers up to date and submit the updated consent to the IRB for review and approval
- Notify the IRB when there are significant changes in the research project and/or when information about the research project provided up to that point is no longer sufficient for maintaining legally effective informed consent. The IRB may determine that notification of subjects is necessary
- Verify the subject's willingness to continue in the research project
- Submit proposed changes to the consent process or consent document(s) to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation

[Return to index](#)

### **Investigator Responsibilities - Study Completion and Last Contact**

The informed consent process ends at the point of last contact with the subject.

The investigator will determine when the final communication with the subject is anticipated or scheduled. Final communication can occur at any time and includes, but is not limited to:

- The signing of the consent form
- After a single procedure
- As a planned oral expression of appreciation after multiple visits
- As follow-up mailings at the end of the research

[Return to index](#)

### **Documentation of Consent**

- Most commonly, informed consent is documented by the use of a written consent document which has been approved by the Mayo Clinic IRB and signed by the subject and/or the subject's legally authorized representative (LAR). The subject's (and/or the LAR's) signature and date and time of their consent are required on the consent document to verify that consent has been obtained.
- When a consent document incorporates the HIPAA (Privacy Rule) language, regulations require that the subject must be given a copy of the signed consent document.
- Other signatures on the consent document may include (as appropriate):
  - Individuals interacting with the subject to obtain consent (i.e. investigator or research study staff identified on the research study application as approved to obtain consent).
  - Legally Authorized Representative who may be consenting and signing for the child, relative, principal or ward of the state.
  - Parents or guardians who may give permission and sign for the child or relative.
  - Witnesses and/or advocates involved in the consent process.
  - If a subject is unable to physically sign the consent document but is capable of consenting to participate in the study, a witness will be present

to observe the consent process. The witness should use the margin of the document to record a brief statement indicating the observation of the consent process and the subject's voluntary participation, and sign and date the note. The witness will then sign the written consent document on behalf of the subject and writes the subject's full name on the signature line.

- The date should include the month, day and year using the mm/dd/yyyy format.
- The time should include 'A.M.' or 'P.M.' or be in a 24-hour "military" format.
- If the IRB requires documentation of oral consent in the subject's medical record (also known as a 'Consent and Enrollment Note'), this will be specified in the IRB approval notification to the Principal Investigator (PI).
- The PI will maintain the original signed consent document in the study file. Documentation of oral consent will also be retained in the study file.

[Return to index](#)

## Digital Signature Capture

An electronic version of the informed consent document, or the HIPAA authorization form, with Digital Signature Capture may be utilized with IRB approval.

At Mayo Clinic, the technical capability for Digital Signature Capture is housed within the Participant Tracking (PTrax) application and is, therefore, available only to studies utilizing PTrax. The functionality is built using DocuSign and is coordinated through the Mayo Clinic Clinical Trials Management System (CTMS). Following IRB approval of the use of Digital Signature Capture for documentation of informed consent or HIPAA authorization, the investigator will coordinate electronic preparation of the consent form or HIPAA authorization form with the CTMS Service and Solution Center.

## Informed Consent/HIPAA Authorization Using Digital Signature Capture

Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization using Digital Signature Capture utilizes an electronic device, such as a tablet, **while the subject, and/or the subject's representative, is in the physical presence of the person authorized to obtain consent/HIPAA authorization.**

At Mayo Clinic:

- Digital Signature Capture is permissible only for the following:
  - consent by competent adults, or
  - consent by a legally authorized representative (LAR), or
  - permission of a parent/guardian when the same form will not be used for documentation of the child's assent, or
  - witnessed consent, i.e. a subject is capable of making a decision to participate in the study but physically unable to sign the consent form.
- Linked applications are not eligible for the use of Digital Signature Capture.
- Subjects and their representatives must be English-speakers and the consent document/HIPAA authorization must be written in English.

## **New studies**

Investigators proposing to utilize Digital Signature Capture for new studies are required, within the IRB application, to provide a plan to the IRB detailing the signing procedure for the specific study. Investigators will communicate their intent when defining the consent/HIPAA authorization process within the IRB application. The IRB will determine if Digital Signature Capture and the defined consent/HIPAA authorization process is appropriate.

Study teams must specify whether approval for Digital Signature Capture is being requested for the informed consent document, or the HIPAA form, or both using the following language for new applications:

*Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization will involve the use of the Research Participant Tracking (PTrax) Digital Signature Capture technology for research informed consent/HIPAA authorization forms. This is an institutionally approved process for documenting consent/HIPAA authorization only while the subject, and/or the subject's representative, is in the physical presence of the person authorized to obtain consent/HIPAA authorization. The study team may print a copy of the signed consent form/HIPAA authorization form for the subject or their representative. The consent form/HIPAA authorization form will also be available to the subject via the patient portal.*

*Note: If the subject or their representative prefers not to use the Digital Signature Capture technology, the study team will provide a paper consent form/HIPAA authorization form for signature.*

## **Modifications to Existing Studies to Add the Use of Digital Signature Capture**

Study teams may include the addition of Digital Signature Capture as part of a modification being submitted for other purposes. The investigator will create a modification in the IRB electronic system and include the following language in the modification form:

*This study is being updated to allow the use of Digital Signature Capture technology. Please refer to the IRBe application for specific updates.*

Investigators will communicate their intent to use Digital Signature Capture by defining the consent process/HIPAA authorization process within the related section of the modified IRB application.

Study teams must specify whether approval for Digital Signature Capture is being requested for the informed consent document, or the HIPAA form, or both using the following language for modifications to existing applications:

*Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization will involve the use of the Research Participant Tracking (PTrax) Digital Signature Capture technology for research informed consent forms/HIPAA authorization forms. This is an institutionally approved process for documenting consent/HIPAA authorization only while the subject, and/or the subject's representative, is in the physical presence of the person authorized to obtain consent. The study team may print a copy of the signed consent form/HIPAA authorization form for the subject or their representative. The consent form/HIPAA authorization form will also be available to the subject via the patient portal.*

*Note: If the subject or their representative prefers not to use the Digital Signature Capture technology, the study team will provide a paper consent form/HIPAA authorization form for signature.*

[Return to index](#)

## **Electronic Informed Consent**

An electronic, on-line version of the informed consent document, or the HIPAA authorization form, may be utilized with IRB approval.

At Mayo Clinic, the technical capability for Electronic Informed Consent is coordinated through the Mayo Clinic Clinical Trials Management System (CTMS). Following IRB approval for the use of Electronic Informed Consent for documentation of informed consent or HIPAA authorization, the investigator will coordinate the use of Electronic Informed Consent with the CTMS Service and Solution Center. CTMS also provides study teams with training in the use of Electronic Informed Consent and is the contact for questions and troubleshooting regarding Electronic Informed Consent.

## **Informed Consent/HIPAA Authorization Using Electronic Informed Consent**

Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization using Electronic Informed Consent is obtained on-line.

At Mayo Clinic:

- The IRB determines if Electronic Informed Consent and the defined consent/HIPAA authorization process are appropriate for a particular study.
- Electronic Informed Consent is permissible only for documentation of consent/HIPAA authorization by competent adult subjects who are English-speaking and able to read English.
- The consent document/HIPAA authorization must be written in English. Electronic Informed Consent may be considered for studies that propose to use, or are using, “mail out” consents or HIPAA Authorization forms, or verbal consent with HIPAA. These most often are studies for which on-site study subject visits are not necessary, for example, survey studies or studies involving collection of samples that do not require a clinic visit. Other studies may be considered by the IRB for use of Electronic Informed Consent on a study-specific basis.
- Linked Protocol and PI applications are not eligible for the use of Electronic Informed Consent.

## **New studies**

Investigators proposing to utilize Electronic Informed Consent for new studies are required, within the IRB application, to provide a plan to the IRB detailing the informed consent process and signature procedure for the specific study. The informed consent process must detail a process for timely communication between the potential participant and the study team to address questions from potential participants. Investigators will also describe in the IRB application a process for enrolling subjects that prefer not to use Electronic Informed Consent,

The IRB will determine if Electronic Informed Consent and the defined consent/HIPAA authorization plan is appropriate.

Study teams must specify whether approval for Electronic Informed Consent is being requested for the informed consent document, or the HIPAA form, or both, using the following language for new applications:

*Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization will involve the use of Electronic Informed Consent for research informed consent/HIPAA authorization forms. This is an institutionally approved process for documenting consent/HIPAA authorization using an on-line process. The subject may print or electronically save the consent form, or may contact the study team to provide a copy of the consent.*

*Note: If the subject prefers not to use Electronic Informed Consent, the study team will utilize the following process for enrollment of these subjects (describe the process).*

### **Modifications to Existing Studies to Add the Use of Electronic Informed Consent**

Study teams may include the addition of Electronic Informed Consent as part of a modification being submitted for other purposes. The investigator will create a modification in the IRB electronic system and include the following language in the modification form:

*This study is being updated to allow the use of Electronic Informed Consent. Please refer to the IRBe application for specific updates.*

Investigators proposing to modify existing studies to include Electronic Informed Consent are required, within the IRB application, to provide a plan to the IRB detailing the informed consent process and signature procedure for the specific study. The informed consent process must detail a process for timely communication between the potential participant and the study team to address questions from potential participants. Investigators will also describe in the IRB application a process for enrolling subjects that prefer not to use Electronic Informed Consent,

The IRB will determine if Electronic Informed Consent and the defined consent/HIPAA authorization plan are appropriate for a particular study.

Study teams must specify whether approval for Electronic Informed Consent is being requested for the informed consent document, or the HIPAA form, or both, using the following language for modifications to existing applications:

*Documentation of informed consent/HIPAA authorization will involve the use of Electronic Informed Consent for research informed consent/HIPAA authorization forms. This is an institutionally approved process for documenting consent/HIPAA authorization using an on-line process. The subject may print or electronically save the consent form, or may contact the study team to provide a copy of the consent.*

*Note: If the subject prefers not to use Electronic Informed Consent, the study team will utilize the following process for enrollment of these subjects (describe the process).*

[Return to index](#)

# Consent Forms and the Subject's Medical Record

## Greater than Minimal Risk Research

- When a research subject is a patient or becomes a patient receiving medical care while participating in a greater than minimal risk research study, it is important that a copy of the consent form be made available to their health care providers.
- For greater than minimal risk research conducted at Mayo Clinic, it is required that the consent document be scanned into the electronic medical record (EMR).
- The Mayo Clinic investigator or their designee must submit a photocopy of the signed consent document to the Mayo Clinic Health Information Management Services (HIMS) Scanning Department for inclusion into the prospective subject's (patient's) EMR (<http://intranet.mayo.edu/charlie/health-information-management-services-scanning-rst/>).
- The IRB may waive the requirement that the signed consent form is scanned into the subject's medical record for research conducted at Mayo Clinic. When applicable, the IRB will specify the waiver of the scanning requirement in the IRB approval notification to the Principal Investigator.
- Investigators at institutions for which the Mayo Clinic IRB is the IRB of record will comply with the policies of the relying institution.

## Minimal Risk Research

- For research conducted at Mayo Clinic, the IRB may require scanning of consent documents for a minimal risk study into the subject's EMR. If this is required, the IRB will specify this requirement in the IRB approval notification to the Principal Investigator.
- Investigators at institutions for which the Mayo Clinic IRB is the IRB of record will comply with the policies of the relying institution.
- When the IRB approves waiver of the requirement to obtain a signed written consent form, the Principal Investigator should consider including the following information in the research study files:
  - Who was approached
  - Name of project
  - Who explained the project
  - Brief summary of what was explained
  - The subject expressed an understanding of the research project and willingness to participate
  - Questions (if any) were answered to the subject's satisfaction
  - Subject agreed to participate, and
  - Written information about the project was given to the subject, if appropriate.
- This note should be signed and dated by the person obtaining consent.

[Return to index](#)

## **Study Record Retention Requirements (Investigator):**

- The investigator will retain all written consent documents per federal regulations, Sponsor record retention requirements, and/or institutional policy.
- Study records related to research, including consent documents, must be retained for a minimum of 3 years after the completion of the research.
- FDA-regulated studies may require longer retention periods.
- The records must be accessible for inspection and copying by authorized representatives of regulatory entities such as the FDA and the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP).

[Return to index](#)

## **Subject Withdrawal and Data Retention**

- When a subject withdraws from a study, the data collected on the subject to the point of withdrawal remains part of the study database and may not be removed. The consent document cannot give the participant the option of having data removed.
- An investigator may ask a subject who is withdrawing whether the subject wishes to provide continued follow-up and further data collection subsequent to their withdrawal from the interventional portion of the study. Under this circumstance, the discussion with the subject distinguishes between study-related interventions and continued follow-up of associated clinical outcome information, such as medical course or laboratory results obtained through non-invasive chart review, and address the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality of the subject's information.
- The investigator must obtain the subject's consent for this limited participation in the study (if such a situation was not described in the original consent document). The IRB must approve the consent document.
- If a subject withdraws from the interventional portion of a study and does not consent to continued follow-up of associated clinical outcome information, the investigator must not access for purposes related to the study the subject's medical record or other confidential records requiring the subject's consent. However, an investigator may review study data related to the participant collected prior to the subject's withdrawal from the study, and may consult public records, such as those establishing survival status.

[Return to Index](#)

## **Related Documents and Websites**

[IRB Consent Form Template and Tools](#)

[Informed Consent and Assessment of Capacity to Consent to Research](#)

[Guidance for Investigators and the IRB Informed Consent and Assessment of Capacity to Consent to Research](#)

Consent Tools: [Informed Consent for Research: A Guide to Assessing a Participant's Understanding](#)

HIMS Scanning website: <http://intranet.mayo.edu/charlie/health-information-management-services-scanning-rst/>

[Special Categories of Research: Children](#)

[Office for Human Research Protections \(OHRP\): Use of Electronic Informed Consent: Questions and Answers: Guidance for Institutional Review Boards, Investigators, and Sponsors \(December, 2016\)](#)

[Return to Index](#)

## Definitions

**Consent Document:** A structured, written description in understandable terms of relevant research project information. The written consent document is not consent itself; it is the record of what has been communicated to a potential participant. It is the document that ensures all regulatory elements are present and communicated to a potential participant. When signed by the potential participant, the consent document is a record of the receipt of research-related information by the participant. It also serves as reference material for the participant as the research project progresses. It is not a contract and is not legally binding, and the participant may choose to withdraw consent at any time.

**Digital Signature Capture:** The process of collecting a signature to document informed consent for research in a digital form that is incorporated in and attached to or associated with an electronic document. This process utilizes an electronic device, such as a tablet, while the subject, and/or the subject's representative, is in the physical presence of the person authorized to obtain consent.

**Documentation:** Documentation of informed consent includes use of a written IRB-approved consent document, signed and dated by the prospective subject or the prospective subject's legally authorized representative.

**Electronic Informed Consent:** Electronic informed consent refers to the use of electronic systems and processes that may employ multiple electronic media, including text, graphics, audio, video, podcasts, passive and interactive Web sites, biological recognition devices, and card readers, to convey information related to the study and to obtain and document informed consent.

**Enrollment:** Occurs when an eligible, informed, potential participant undergoes the initial informed consent process and voluntarily agrees to participate in a research project. Example: You enroll 100 to accrue 25. See also Accrual.

**Informed Consent:** An ongoing process of communication between the participant and the study team. Informed consent is a continuing process by which a participant, after having been informed, voluntarily confirms his or her willingness to participate in a research project and can demonstrate understanding of all aspects of the research project that are relevant to the participant's decision to participate.

**Legally Authorized Representative (LAR):** An individual or judicial or other body authorized under applicable law to consent on behalf of a prospective subject to the subject's participation in the procedures involved in the research.

**Legally Effective Informed Consent:** A potential participant has been provided enough information to make a decision; the potential participant has the capacity to make a decision; the potential participant understands the consequences of his or her decision; and the potential participant can communicate that decision.

**Minimal Risk:** The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

**Mayo Clinic:** Mayo Clinic refers to Mayo Clinic in Arizona, Florida, and Rochester, Minnesota; Mayo Clinic Health System; and all owned and affiliated clinics, hospitals, and entities.

**Oral (verbal) Consent:** A spoken presentation of the elements of informed consent to the prospective subject or their legally authorized representative. The presentation may be based on information contained within an oral consent script or the written consent document. Oral consent is often associated with waiving the documentation of consent. Oral consent is usually recorded in the research project files.

**Recruitment:** Recruitment, a component of the consent process, is the process of distributing or presenting information which describes the research project and eligibility criteria so that a prospective subject may consider enrollment.

## References

*Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRP), version 1/2012*

*Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) Obtaining and Documenting Informed Consent of subjects Who Do Not Speak English, November 9, 1995*

*Guidance on Institutional Review Board Review of Clinical Trial Websites*  
(<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/clinicaltrials.html>)

## Federal Regulations

[45 CFR 46.116 General Requirements for Informed Consent](#)

[45 CFR 46.117 - Documentation of informed consent](#)

[21 CFR Sec. 50.25 Elements of informed consent](#)

[Return to index](#)

## Owner

Pam Kwon on behalf of Office for Human Research Protection

## Contact

Michelle Daiss, Angela Patterson

## Revision History

Date	Synopsis of Change
September 18, 2017	Updated to the new policy template. Added section on Electronic Informed Consent, added new key term of Electronic Informed Consent along with related documents Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP): Use of Electronic Informed Consent:

	Questions and Answers: Guidance for Institutional Review Boards, Investigators, and Sponsors (December, 2016).
August 23, 2017	Minor revision. Updated the following definitions per Glossary review: Consent Document, Enrollment, Informed Consent, Legally Authorized Representative, Legally Effective Informed Consent, Mayo Clinic, Oral (verbal) Consent, and Recruitment.
April 19, 2017	Scheduled review. No changes made.
June 28, 2016	Scheduled review. Deleted the following from the 9th bullet under the heading 'After IRB Approval': if possible,
March 4, 2015	Scheduled review. No changes made.