



## Connecting Students to the World of Work

### Evaluation Mini-Guide #3: PERMISSION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

This mini-guide is one of a series designed to provide recipients of the OAC's Connecting Students to the World of Work grants with guidance for conducting evaluations of their funded programs. Each mini-guide offers basic information on a specific topic to help grantee organizations build capacity to implement evaluation activities.

This mini-guide focuses on permission and confidentiality.<sup>1</sup> Prior to any evaluation activities, you may need to obtain general permission from administrative entities to conduct the study, as well as specific permission for each student to participate. Once you have permission, you must protect all participants' confidentiality. Protecting confidentiality refers to preventing anyone outside of the program from accessing participants' identifying information (i.e., knowing who provided information) and from connecting participants' identities to their responses (i.e., knowing who said what).

#### **How do we receive permission to conduct the evaluation and for students to participate?**

**Organizational Permission.** You may be required to secure authorization or permission from the school board, another governing body, board, or person in your organization to conduct the evaluation. If you plan to conduct data collection activities on school grounds or during school hours, for example, permission from school personnel may be necessary. Investigate and follow the procedures for receiving clearance for evaluation through your organization and any partner organizations involved in the data collection processes. To request organization permission (or participant consent, described below), you will need to assemble and present information about the evaluation, such as:

- Rationale for conducting the evaluation (i.e., why it is important to do);
- What data will be collected (what questions will be asked) and from whom;
- When, where, and by whom data will be collected, entered, and stored;
- Potential risks and benefits to participants;
- Steps you will take to protect the confidentiality of participants;
- How the results will be used.

**Participant Consent.** In addition to securing any necessary organizational permissions, you must also obtain individual's consent to participate in the evaluation. Once informed about the evaluation, adults from whom you plan to collect data—such as parents, teachers, or program staff—can provide consent for themselves. Depending on the extent of the data collection activity and any overarching requirements, such consent can be obtained either verbally (e.g., acknowledgement given at the beginning of a focus group) or in writing (e.g., via a formalized consent form).

Collecting data from individuals under 18 years of age (e.g., students) typically requires parental permission. Parental consent procedures vary across school districts and can be either "active" (a student cannot participate in the evaluation unless his/her parent signs and returns a form to authorize participation) or "passive" (all students participate unless parents sign and return a form to disallow their child's participation). In either case, a student is not allowed to take part in the evaluation—that is, you cannot collect or use any data for that child—unless parental consent has been obtained according to local protocols. A sample parental permission form (for "passive" consent) is included in this mini-guide.

#### **How do we protect the confidentiality of participants?**

There are a number of precautions that you may use to protect the confidentiality of participants:

1. Use non-identifying ID numbers, instead of names, for individual data records.
  - a. Create a Participant Key document (e.g., an Excel spreadsheet) that assigns each participant a unique ID number. For example:

Last name	First name	ID #
Hurley	James	ID01
Summers	Dawn	ID02

<sup>1</sup> For a full review of procedures and considerations for conducting research with human subjects, including the protection of confidentiality, please see the National Institutes of Health's website: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/hs/index.htm>

Note: It is best to generate generic ID numbers specific to the study. You should not use numbers that could be linked with identifying information, such as student IDs or Social Security numbers.

- b. Enter all data (e.g., survey responses, grades) in a separate data file that does NOT contain participant names (i.e., do NOT enter data into the Participant Key document). Clearly label the data with the evaluation ID that corresponds with the correct person. For example:

ID #	Question #1	Question #2	Question #3
IDO1	6	6	5
IDO2	4	1	5

- c. Password-protect all documents including data or identifying information.
- After entering data, remove the participant's name or other identifying information from the original materials (e.g., blacking the name out with a marker or cutting the name off the page).
  - Encrypt all files, folders, and emails that contain the data or Participant Key, and securely store any hard-copy data documents in locked locations.
  - Limit access to the files. Do not provide the passwords to files or documents to anyone outside of the evaluation; restrict access to only those entering or analyzing data.
  - Be aware of what information may compromise the confidentiality of participants. Identifying information may include: names, addresses, relatives'/parents' names or addresses, birthdays, phone numbers, email addresses, Social Security numbers, student IDs, photos, or art projects.

### Sample Evaluation Permission Form

The Oregon Arts Commission has contracted with NPC Research to conduct an evaluation of [your program's name]. The evaluation will examine the program functioning and impact, including what students like and don't like about participating in the program and whether their participation impacted their perceptions of art, school, college, or their career. If your child participates in the evaluation, s/he will be asked to complete two surveys, one at the start of the program and one at the end. The surveys will inquire about your child's exposure to/interest in art, experiences with the program, and desires for completing high school and college. The surveys will take about 15 minutes to complete. In addition, the evaluation will collect information on your child's engagement in the program as reported by the artists.

Participating in the evaluation will cause little or no risk to your child. One potential risk is that some children might find certain questions to be sensitive. We will protect your child's privacy by not disclosing your child's name to anyone outside of the program and not connecting his/her name to any survey answers. Data will only be reported in the aggregate; names will not be used. Though your child may not directly benefit from participating in the evaluation, the study results will help improve programs dedicated to the arts in Oregon for your child and other children in the future.

Participation in the evaluation is voluntary. If you decide you would not like your child to participate in the study, s/he can still take part in the arts program. Your child may also skip any questions in the surveys and may stop taking the survey at any point without penalty. If you would like to see the survey, please contact us for a copy.

Please read the section below and check the box only if you do NOT want your child to take part in the evaluation. If you check the box "no" below, then sign this form and return it to us and your child will not participate. If you do not return the form, your child will be asked to participate. If you have questions about the evaluation, please contact the researchers [evaluator name, affiliation, phone number, email].

Thank you!

Your child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

I read this permission form and I understand what the evaluation is about.

No, my child may not take part in the evaluation.

If you do not check this box, your signature provides permission for your child to participate in the evaluation.

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_