Informed Consent Procedures

This resource contains information about obtained consent procedures for interviews, focus groups, observations, and surveys. Before reviewing this information, please watch the first three [Library Evaluation 101 videos](https://www.libraryeval.org/library-evaluation-101/) (Protecting Evaluation Participants’ Rights, Patron Privacy, and Informed Consent). When adapting the information in this resource for use in your evaluation project, be sure to check with your library administration and/or governing authority regarding any additional information you will need to provide or procedures you will need to follow.

**Interviews**

Read an informed consent statement to the interviewee prior to beginning the interview. For example:

The library is gathering feedback about [topic], and we would like to know what you think about it. During the interview today, we will ask you questions about your experience. It will take about [duration (e.g., “30 minutes”)]. You can stop the interview at any time, and you can choose not to answer any of the questions. We don’t anticipate that the interview will present any risks for you.

The library will use the information you share to [purpose, e.g. “improve storytimes for you and everyone else in the community”]. Your answers will be confidential. We may quote what you said in our report or in our marketing materials, but we won’t use your name.

Do you have any questions I can answer about the interview process? Would you like to participate in the interview?

[If audio recording]: I would like to record our conversation to help with note taking. The members of our evaluation team are the only people who will have access to those recordings, and we will destroy them after our report is finalized. Do I have your permission to record this conversation?

You also need provide the name and contact information of the person they can contact if participants have questions later or if they wish to withdraw from the study at a later time.

**Focus Groups**

Read an informed consent statement to the participants prior to beginning the focus group. For example:

The library is gathering feedback about [topic], and we would like to know what you think about it. During the focus group today, we will ask you questions about your experience. It will take about [duration (e.g., “30 minutes”)]. You can stop participating at any time, and you can choose not to answer any of the questions. We don’t anticipate that the focus group will present any risks for you.

The library will use the information you share to [purpose, e.g. “improve storytimes for you and everyone else in the community”]. Please respect the privacy of everyone in this group by not sharing what they say with others outside of this group. Your answers will be confidential. We may quote what you said in our report or in our marketing materials, but we won’t use your name.

Do you have any questions I can answer about the focus group process? Would you like to participate in the focus group?

[If audio recording]: I would like to record our discussion to help with note taking. The members of our evaluation team are the only people who will have access to those recordings, and we will destroy them after our report is finalized. Do I have your permission to record this conversation? [obtain verbal consent from each participant]

You also need provide the name and contact information of the person they can contact if participants have questions later or if they wish to withdraw from the study at a later time.

**Observations**

Post a sign notifying patrons that you are conducting observations and the purpose of the observations. This sign will explain how to opt-out of the study and who to contact with questions. Here is sample language:

Our evaluation team will be observing [subject of observation, e.g., “the makerspace,” “baby storytime,” etc.] today so that we can learn more about [purpose of observation, e.g., “how people use this space,” etc.]. If you prefer not to be included in the observation, please notify the staff member. If you have any questions about this observation, please contact [name, contact information].

You will also need to prepare a handout or website that includes the full information about the study available for anyone who requests it. And, if you are observing a program or class, you should also make a brief announcement about the observation.

**Surveys**

Include a consent statement at the beginning of your survey, for example:

Please take a moment to provide feedback about [topic]. The library will use the information you share to [purpose, e.g. “improve storytimes for you and everyone else in the community”]. The survey will take about [duration, e.g., “2 minutes”] to complete. Your answers will be [anonymous/confidential]. [If your survey gathers identifiable information, explain how you will protect respondents’ confidentiality.]

You can stop the survey at any time, and you can choose not to answer any of the questions. We don’t anticipate that the survey will present any risks for you. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact [name, contact information].

A person’s decision to complete the survey is taken as their consent. In general, parental consent is required if your survey gathers any identifying information from a young person. You’ll need to check with your governing authority to determine if there are any specific local requirements that apply to your library.