

Recruitment of Subjects through Social Media

Researchers are increasingly using social media platforms to recruit and interact with potential and enrolled research participants. The Clarion University of Pennsylvania IRB has therefore developed the following guidelines for the recruitment of human subjects through social media.

1. General information
 - a. The IRB will review all social media research.
 - b. Researchers are to comply with any social media terms of use.
 - c. Researchers are to understand all social media platform privacy and security provisions.
 - d. Researchers are to appropriately identify the participant pool and make sure the recruitment materials are targeted to that audience.
2. Procedures
 - a. Permissible types of recruiting
 - 1) Static materials: posts that do not permit commenting, liking, or sharing (all recruitment materials must be included in IRB protocol)
 - a) Requires a clear social media management plan approved by the IRB
 - b) All recruitment materials must be included in social media management plan
 - 2) Interactive recruitment materials: posts that do permit commenting, liking, or sharing
 - a) Requires a clear social media management plan approved by IRB
 - b) All recruitment materials must be included in the social media management plan
 - c) The researcher response process must be identified in the social media management plan
 - 3) Recruitment via public or private groups
 - a) Requires a clear social media management plan approved by IRB
 - b) All recruitment materials must be included in the social media management plan
 - c) The researcher response process must be identified in social media management plan
 - d) Researchers must familiarize themselves with any platform and/or group restrictions
 - e) Researchers must seek permission (to be included in the social media management plan) from group moderator to post recruitment materials
 - 4) Private messaging
 - a) Requires a clear social media management plan approved by the IRB
 - b) All recruitment materials must be included in the social media management plan
 - c) The researcher response process must be identified in the social media management plan
 - d) This type of social media contact is subject to extensive IRB review
 - b. Researchers are encouraged to use official Clarion University of Pennsylvania social media accounts for recruiting research participants. Protocols outlining the use of personal accounts must include a clear rationale for such use and will be reviewed on

- a case-by-case basis. If the researcher is recruiting in a private social media group, the researcher must identify that they are affiliated with Clarion University (for example, I am Jane Doe, PhD, a Professor at Clarion University conducting IRB approved research).
- c. Recruitment should not involve the fabrication of online identities or any other deception.
 - d. All screening of participants is to be done offline.
 - e. A plan to handle any identifiable information gathered from/about potential or enrolled participants needs to be identified and included in the IRB protocol.
 - f. The social media management plan must include the following (if appropriate):
 - 1) All social media sites that will be used for recruiting
 - 2) All public or private groups that will be used for recruiting
 - a) Information about the moderator of the group
 - b) Permission from the group moderator
 - 3) Plans for adhering to the terms of use and privacy and security features of the social media platforms
 - 4) All recruitment materials that will be used
 - 5) A detailed process for responding to materials
 - a) Who will respond to any messages/comments?
 - b) What kind of information will be provided?
 - 6) Information about any data that will be collected
 - 7) Information about any links that will be included in the recruitment materials