OCREAC

Ottawa-Carleton Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee

INFORMATION LETTER and/or INFORMED CONSENT GUIDELINES AND TEMPLATE

INFORMATION LETTER(S) and/or CONSENT FORM(S):

- **Clear, easy-to-read language** must be used when preparing information letters and consent forms for potential participants.
- **Separate consent forms** must be adapted for each participant group (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators).
- These documents must be printed on **institution/agency letterhead** (if available) and include the following information (as appropriate):

Title of Study

Principal Investigator(s) and Institution/Organization

Purpose of Study

- Indicate the purpose or rationale for conducting the study
- Provide some background information on the study

Description of Study Procedures

- Use simple language to describe all procedures
- Describe how data will be collected (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.)
- Describe what the participant will be asked to do, including the types of questions that will be asked, and whether data will be collected individually or as a group. Description should be sufficient that participants can determine the relative risk versus benefit to participating (e.g., questions related to mental health, substance use, etc.).
- Indicate whether any information is to be collected from files or records for individual students (if applicable)
- Identify whether data collected will be recorded (audio or video). Active consent must be used for all mechanisms or formats used for capturing data (e.g., audio recording, picture taking).
- Indicate the time commitment required for participation (e.g., number of sessions and length of sessions), including the time associated with any follow-up studies, if relevant.
- Outline when the data collection will be scheduled (including location and time). Be clear if this is to take place outside of school time. Indicate that scheduling of any data collection on school site will occur at the teacher's convenience to minimize interference with daily routines.
- For any data collected from students in a classroom or on the school site, indicate that a teacher will be present at all times.
- Specify what the child/student will be doing during data collection should they not have consent to participate.
- Indicate the anticipated start and end dates for the project.

Potential Risks

- Provide a clear description of any *known* or *potential* risks (e.g., physical risks, discomforts or inconvenience, as well as any psychological or social discomforts) that may be associated with participation in the research.
- If there are no known risks to participating in the study, please indicate this in a statement.

Potential Benefits

- Describe any known or anticipated benefits for participants, school, school board
- Describe any known or anticipated benefits for the general topic of the research or for a broader more important area of knowledge
- Be clear that participants may not directly benefit from their participation (if applicable)
- Provide details regarding any compensation or honorariums for participants, including financial or other remuneration. (*Note:* incentives are not permitted).

Confidentiality and/or Anonymity

- Describe the procedures and steps being taken to ensure the confidentiality and/or anonymity of participants and data
- Identify any limitations to confidentiality
- Indicate that study results will be reported in ways that ensure complete confidentiality
- Indicate that study results will not appear in any school records
- Ensure that participants are clear on the difference between confidentiality and *anonymity* – anonymity can only be assured if there is no way to link data back to the participants

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

- Indicate that participation is *voluntary* and that individuals may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and with no adverse consequences
- Indicate whether participants may decline to answer any questions and whether there are any repercussions for doing so
- Consider withdrawal at all phases of the study (e.g., after consent but before study begins, during data collection, after data collection is complete).
- Indicate when withdrawal of information is no longer possible (if applicable).
- Indicate how participants withdraw, who they contact, and what will happen to any data collected up to the point of withdrawal.
- Describe any impact (if any) the withdrawal might have on the participant.

Data Management and Storage

- Indicate how the collected data will be used
- Describe who has access to the data
- Indicate how the data will be stored, in what form the data will be stored (e.g., paper, electronic), and how long it will be stored
- Describe when and how data will be destroyed after the study is completed

Conflict of Interest (if applicable)

- Identify whether there is any known, potential or perceived conflict of interest between the principal investigator(s) and potential participants

Dissemination of Results

- Indicate the plan for how the findings of the study will be shared or disseminated, including whether or not the findings may be published
- A summary of the results should be made available to schools/participants – indicate when and how they will be made available

Study Approval

- Indicate that the study has been approved by the Ottawa-Carleton Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee (OCREAC)
- Indicate that the research study has ethical approval from your institution (if applicable)
- Indicate that the study has been approved by the school principal (if applicable)

Contact Information

- Contact information for the primary investigator(s), including name, telephone number, and/or email address for answering questions about the project
- Contact information for the researchers' institutional Research Ethics Board (if applicable), should participants have ethical questions or concerns

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Researchers are not permitted to collect personal information on the consent form that is not deemed necessary for the provision of consent (e.g., birthdates, phone numbers, email, etc.).
- Researchers may not collect any information on participants who **decline to participate** unless a strong justification for linking this information to an outcome measure is provided.
- Only those who **agree to participate** will be asked to complete and return the consent form.
- Researchers are not permitted at any time to seek information that would permit them to contact a student, staff, or family member at some future time – unless it is *explicitly linked to the study methodology* (e.g., follow-up is required as part of the study design and research questions).

CONSENT FORM (ACTIVE CONSENT): ***Modify as necessary for other participants (e.g., teachers, administrators)***

Please note that only students with parental consent may participate. It must be clearly articulated that only parents who consent should return the form. Also, permission must be obtained for video/audio-taping or photographic procedures as provided in this example

---

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.

I have read and understood the request for my child to participate in the study of (*give title*). I have discussed it with my child and...

☐ I give permission for my child to participate.

☐ I give permission for my child to be audio/videotaped/photographed. (*Include if the study is using such protocols*)

This form is to be completed and returned to the school **ONLY** if I consent to my child participating in this research.

Name of Student: *(please print)*_____ Date: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: *(please print)*_____

Signature of Parent/Guardian:_____

Signature of Student (if 18 or older):_____