



## Asking for Implied Consent by E-mail

### INTRODUCTION

When conducting evaluation research and you plan to present your results publicly at your professional organization for example, or publish them in a journal, you **must** secure formal consent from the subjects or clients in your evaluation study before they can participate in the evaluation. There are various ways to secure consent from participants in an evaluation study and Extension educators and faculty have used many, depending on the study. When children or seniors are involved for instance, you have added consideration.

Two examples of consent forms developed in Cooperative Extension in PA are demonstrated here in PA EXAMPLE #21 and in [PA EXAMPLE #22](#). In these examples, consent was obtained via email or in person, respectively.

Some background information about consent forms first.

- The process of protecting human beings or animals in a study is handled by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the Office for Research Protections under the Vice President for Research for the university in Keller Building, University Park. The web site is <http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/areas/humans/>
- You will find that social science and biomedical science are grouped together. Take a look at three sections: policies and procedures to see the overall scope, the training module in which you read and take a 10 question test (which you can retake until you pass it) and finally, some model forms for developing a consent form for your study.

Below is an example of a consent form for an extension program in which consent was requested via email.

### STUDY TEAM

Nancy Ellen Kiernan, Extension Evaluator, Cooperative Extension, University Park  
Theodore Alter, Professor, Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University Park

### TITLE OF PROJECT

The Role of PA Cooperative Extension Program Evaluation Website

### PROCEDURE

Below is an example of a consent form distributed with an email request for participation in the study. The email provided several dates from which the participant could choose to be interviewed by phone. Completion and return of the email, indicating that the participant had read the information and wanted to participate, demonstrated what is called implied consent, an acceptable means of obtaining consent for a web survey.



## CONSENT FORM (Used to obtain implied consent by email)

1. **Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to gather evidence about how the Evaluation Website has contributed to evaluation in Extension and how the website can help Extension educators in the future.
2. **Procedures** to be followed: You will be asked 4 questions in the interview.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no known risks involved in completing this interview.
4. **Benefits:** The results of the study will benefit you in your role in Extension. The results will benefit Extension evaluation and programming as a whole.
5. **Duration:** It will take approximately fifteen minutes for the interview.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** The interview does not ask for any information that would identify to whom the responses belong. Therefore, your responses in the interview are recorded by hand on blank paper with no identification. If the results are published, no information that would identify you will be written since your name is in no way linked to your responses.
7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Contact Nancy Ellen Kiernan or Ted Alter with questions about the research project. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact Penn State's Office for Research Protections at (814) 865 1775.
8. **Compensation:** There is no compensation for completing this interview.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** You are not required to participate in this study. You can stop your participation at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this study.

Completion and return of the email indicating you wish to participate implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the study.

This consent form (IRB#91308) was reviewed and approved by the Office for Research Protections at The Pennsylvania State University on 08/03/04 (JKG). It expires on 08/02/05 (JKG).

For further information about the evaluation, please contact Nancy Ellen Kiernan ([nekiernan@psu.edu](mailto:nekiernan@psu.edu)). This Web site is copyrighted by the Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.