



# Webinar Series

## Strategies for Navigating Youth Consent in Diverse Contexts

In February 2022, Meghan Fournie, Julie Laliberte, and Wendy Craig presented a webinar *Strategies for Navigating Youth Consent in Diverse Contexts*. Here are some key messages from their webinar. [Click here to view webinar](#) | [Click here to view presentation slides](#)

Researchers have an ethical and legal requirement to get consent from participants in their studies. Consent procedures must include **4 key elements**:

1. A statement that the project is research and participation is voluntary
2. A summary of the research including its purpose, duration, and what is involved
3. Acknowledgement of any foreseeable discomfort or risk that could come with participating in the research
4. Reasonable expected benefits

However, the way in which consent is obtained must also consider the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse populations involved. Language barriers, working with vulnerable populations, and cultural considerations can make the consent process more challenging.

In this webinar, Dr. Wendy Craig, Meghan Fournie, and Julie Laliberte discussed strategies to mitigate some of these challenges. Here are the **key takeaways**.

### Consent is a Communicative Process

- The consent process should not be driven by researchers. Instead, it should be co-created with partner organizations, who can provide insight on barriers to the consent process and what would be the best method in their specific circumstances.
- The consent process should fit with a program's existing structures and policies

### Be Flexible

- The best way to approach getting consent varies depending on the population involved
- Provide options for documenting consent. Paper consent forms, online forms, verbal consent, or videos are all options that could be used depending on the context.

### Consent is Ongoing

- Consent involves an ongoing relationship throughout the program. Researchers must continue to behave ethically beyond the initial consent process and ensure that participants' consent is ongoing
- Participants have the right to stop at any point in the research process
- Participants can also opt in or out of specific research activities



## Centre Safety and Comfort

- Ensuring that youth feel safe and comfortable is essential to the informed consent process. Take steps to build youth's comfort, such as by discussing comfort zones or using team building exercises to build trust.
- Youth may not trust researchers, who they often see as intimidating or overwhelming. To mitigate this, the consent process should take place in a controlled, familiar environment, and program facilitators with whom youth are already comfortable should be present. In some circumstances, it may be best for program facilitators to undertake the consent process themselves.

## Consider Barriers to Guardian Consent

- Try to get guardian consent whenever possible but consider that there are some circumstances where guardian consent could be a barrier to participation.
- Some children may not have access to guardians that can provide consent.
- When consent is required for participation, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth can be put at risk and researchers could miss the most vulnerable youth in their samples. One study found that over 1/3 of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth would not have participated if guardian consent was required.

## Provide Literacy and Language Support

- The language in consent forms is often complex and may be challenging to youth and guardians with varying levels of literacy. Consent information must be accessible, or youth and their guardians may not be informed.
- Image-based videos or verbal consent procedures can help make consent accessible to various language levels.
- For newcomer youth, language supports such as translations should be provided whenever possible.

## Consent Should be Culturally Relevant

- The ways that we ask for consent and the language we use can be highly inappropriate for certain cultural contexts. We must ensure that the ways that we ask for consent are culturally relevant. For example, in Indigenous communities you can work with Elders to translate the required elements of the consent process into stories to make consent more culturally relevant in Indigenous communities.



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada

*The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada*