# Seeking IRB Approval

Many large institutions—such as universities, hospitals, and some state agencies—have their own Institutional Review Boards (IRB) that oversee research activities conducted on site and/or by their members. An IRB's primary responsibility is to protect the rights and well-being of research participants.

Research involves collecting from participants information beyond basic demographics (e.g., about an individual's substance use behaviors or mental health status) that you intend to use in some way (e.g., for evaluation or publication).

Prevention professionals must obtain informed consent from individuals participating in *all* research-related activities.* In certain situations, prevention professionals must also submit their research procedures, including their plan for obtaining informed consent, to an IRB for approval.

When conducting research, prevention professionals must seek IRB approval if they:

- Are required to do so as a condition of funding
- Work for or plan to conduct research on the premises of an institution with an IRB
- Intend to produce generalizable knowledge for the field of prevention (e.g., publish in a peer-reviewed journal, seek model program status)

If you're new to the world of research, learning about and adhering to the many rules guiding ethical practice may seem overwhelming. So if you have even an inkling that you may want to someday use any participant information for research purposes, connect as soon as you can with your evaluators, state agency representatives, and other partners with research expertise—they can help you move forward in an appropriate and ethical way.

* *Consent to participate in research differs from consent to release confidential information, which we cover in the Confidentiality Principle.*

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