Recruitment Materials for Human Subjects Research

General Information

The IRB must review and approve all advertising or other recruitment materials which investigators propose to use to inform potential subjects about a study. Access to direct advertising for research, including print, video, electronic, or audio materials, is the start of the informed consent process.

What information must be included in recruitment materials?

The content of recruitment materials must be informative to the potential subject. The information must be accurate and delivered without “overselling” the concept to the reader. Recruitment materials may not unduly influence the participant's decision to participate in the study. They may not state or imply a certainty of favorable outcome or other benefits beyond those that are outlined in the consent document and protocol.

The following information must be included in any proposed printed recruitment materials:

1. The name of the principal investigator (PI) at the local site;
2. The contact information to learn more about the study;
3. The purpose of the research and/or condition under study;
4. In the U.S. and other developed countries, a specific reference to “research” in the text; and
5. In the U.S., the study title along with JHSPH IRB study number.

In addition, recruiting tools may include the following additional information:

1. The inclusion criteria that determine eligibility for the research;
2. A brief list of the benefits (consistent with the consent documents and research plan) offered to participants, if any;
3. The type of “payment” to participants may be stated, but should not be emphasized by use of font enhancement or other distinction;
4. The time or other commitment required from participants; and
5. The location of the research.