How to Plan Good Projects

What is Fair Treatment in Projects?

It is important to treat people well when you do projects. Researchers call this "ethics" or "ethical treatment." There are rules for how to treat people who help you with your project. Here are the main ones.

Informed consent

Before people say "yes" or "no" to a project, you must tell them

- what the project is about
- what you want them to do
- how much time it will take
- what they will get if they do it
- what could go wrong and how you will make it better
- how to tell you if they want to quit
- who they can call to learn what you found out in your project.

They must know that they have the right to say "no," and that nothing bad will happen if they say "no" to the project. It is important for them to understand that they can say "yes" now, and then change their mind later.

If a child or person with a disability has a guardian, the guardian must also say "yes" to the project. This is done to protect the rights of people who may not understand what they are saying "yes" to. If the guardian says "yes," but the person says "no" to the project, you must respect the person's wish not to be part of the project.

Privacy

"Confidentiality" means that you will keep what the person says a secret. "Anonymity" means that you will not tell anyone who said what in the project. You should promise anonymity, but you may not be able to promise complete confidentiality. For example, if a person tells you they were abused, you may have to tell the police. You may also want to quote them in a report, because they made a good point. If you put it in a report, it is not secret. But as long as you do not write who said it, this is OK.

If you ask for personal information (like their age or disability), you must only use it to talk about your participants as a group. You must not use it in reports to talk about an individual.

The information you get from people must be kept in a safe place, like a locked cabinet or room. Names or other ways to tell who said what must be kept in a different place from what people said. If you videotape or record people, you should erase the tapes when you are done. You should not show them to other people unless you change how the face looks. You may also need to change the voice if it is easy to recognize. It takes special equipment to do these things.

Safety

You must not let people be hurt in any way by your project. You must tell people about what could hurt or upset them, before they say "yes" or "no" to the project. You must also plan how you will help any one who is hurt or upset during the project.

Benefits

It is good to tell people how the project will help them and others like them. You should tell people if they will get paid or get other free things if they are part of your project. People who help you with your project should get to hear what you found out. You should tell them about it in words they understand. You should also listen to what they have to say about what you found out.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

In PAR projects, you are partners with the people who help with the project. It is important that you pick *what* you will do and *how* you will do it together. This means that it is important to

- be sure everyone can understand and take part in decisions
- be aware of how well the group works together
- have a way to solve problems between group members.

Your group must have a way to be sure all its members understand what they will do. You should have a way to find out what people need to participate (like plain language or help to get to meetings). If there are barriers that keep people from having a say in the project, the group must work together to solve those problems.