

# Are You Maximizing Your Institution's Community Engagement Efforts?

By Michael Grippaldi



Everyone is talking about community engagement in research, but finding resources that are trustworthy, engaging, simple, and not time-intensive can be hard. Understanding this need, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) has developed educational resources for your institution's use.

## What is OHRP and what does it do?

OHRP's mission is to protect the rights, welfare, and well-being of those participating in research conducted or supported by the HHS. OHRP does not fund research, like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), but rather regulates it. In this regard, OHRP shares some similarity with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). OHRP achieves its mission by administering the Federal-wide Assurances of Compliance and registration of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), publishing policy and guidance, performing compliance oversight and reviewing allegations of noncompliance, and developing educational programs and materials.

## What educational resources are available from OHRP?

OHRP's Division of Education and Development produces two main categories of educational materials. The first, collected under the [About Research Participation](#) (ARP) webpages, is geared towards facilitating the general public's understanding of research and research participation (Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), 2023). To foster inclusivity, all materials are freely available for public use and distribution and are available in both English and Spanish.

The second is created for those involved with research, including researchers, IRB members and staff, institutional officials, and compliance officers. The goal of these materials is to help those involved with research learn about the ethical principles for conducting research involving humans and successfully apply the regulatory requirements at 45 CFR 46.

## Why should you use OHRP's educational resources for community engagement and education?

OHRP's resources remove some of the mystery that surrounds research by making knowledge accessible and serve as conversation starters between researchers and the public. In this way, they can increase engagement and trust-building with the community.

The **ARP resources** can help prospective participants understand what research is, ask meaningful questions about the study, and make informed decisions about participation. The resources include short videos explaining concepts such as clinical trials, randomization, informed consent, social behavioral health research, and what parents need to know about research involving children. The collection also includes printable informational leaflets as well as recordings of ordinary people sharing their first-person experiences with research participation.

As research becomes more decentralized and institutions bring in community healthcare providers to support it, the **ARP resources** can help strengthen these providers' understanding of how research is different

from clinical care and the special ethical responsibilities that come with performing research activities involving people.

Many institutions are aware of the importance of ensuring diversity and representation in research design, review, and conduct. They have become more invested in supporting and training community members and leaders. These individuals are ambassadors for their communities and represent their community's interests by, for example, participating in IRB review of studies and helping identify and recruit appropriate participants for research. OHRP's [Human Research Protection Training](#) offers a comprehensive and easy-to-follow set of resources to learn about the regulatory requirements (Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), 2022). Institutions may also rely on our [Training Checklist for Someone Working with IRBs](#) to train community representatives serving as members of IRBs (Office for Human Research Protections, n.d.).

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The OHRP website hosts a wealth of knowledge and information including guidance, how-to videos, interactive scenarios, and much more. We encourage you to explore how our materials can be of service to you by visiting <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/education-and-outreach/index.html>. Join our [listserv](#) to receive our news and updates and link to us on your institution's website! **N**

## References

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