

# II3F GD1 Inclusion of Non-English Speaking Participants in Research

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## Overview

Participants who are not fluent in spoken or written English are included in research studies to ensure that the burdens and benefits of research are justly distributed or because the areas of research necessitates involving non-English speaking participants (e.g., international research). Irrespective of the reason, investigators must take care to ensure that non-English speaking participants fully understand their role in the study and provide voluntary informed consent. This document provides guidance relating to translating documents and using interpreters for research involving non-English speaking participants.

## II3F1 Translation of Documents

All written documents to be used with individuals who do not read English must be translated into a language understandable to the participant.

To ensure the accuracy of translations, the University of Nevada, Reno Institutional Review Boards require investigators to submit “back-translations” of all translated documents unless using the services of a certified translator, in which case documentation of the individual’s credentials must be submitted with the translated materials. A back-translation is the document that results when a person other than the original translator translates a document from the translated (i.e., foreign) language back to English.

## Key Points

- On-line translation programs are not always accurate or appropriate for research related documents. Translations should be performed by a translator who has adequate understanding of the purpose of the document and the technical points to be covered in the documents.
- Due to differences in regional dialects, “textbook” translations may not be readily understandable to participants. Translations should be in the dialect that is appropriate for the participant population.
- Carefully read through all documents that will be translated and eliminate repetitious material or text that does not need to be translated. Submit the English versions with the protocol application to the IRB review. The IRB will notify the contact person and principal investigator when the documents are satisfactory. Submit the IRB “approved” documents for translation.
- Talk to the translator. It is very important that the translator understands what the document will be used for. Also, in their careful reading of the text, the translator may find areas that they have questions about.

- Let the translator proof-read the final copy before sending it to the IRB for certification of approval.

A professional translator translates into their primary language or has the material proofread by a native-speaker, works with a proof reader, has specific training in translation, has experience both in translating and in the subject area addressed by the document, and can provide samples of her or his work.

## **Use of Interpreters**

Ideally, the research team will include individuals fluent in the language spoken by potential participants. However, if no members of the research team are fluent in the spoken language or the members whom are fluent may not be available, the principal investigator should engage an interpreter who would be available during the consent processes for all subjects requiring an interpreter and during those subjects' participation in the research study as needed.

A family member of a potential subject should not be used as the translator for that individual because he or she may have a conflicting interest relating to the study and may not be able to fully explain the study's risks and benefits to the potential subject.

Non-English-speaking research subjects must be afforded the opportunity to read a translated consent form and engage in discussion with an individual fluent in their native language in order to provide fully informed consent to participate.

## **Hiring Interpreters for Study Interviews**

If the investigator and participants are not fluent in the same language, an interpreter may be needed to conduct interviews, focus groups or other verbal interactions with participants.

## **Considerations for Selecting Interpreters**

Investigators must consider the relationship of the interpreter to the interviewee or to the community. Selecting an interpreter from within the sample population's community may limit the privacy and confidentiality that can be promised to participants. This may prevent some participants from speaking freely, which could affect the integrity of the data. For confidential interviews, the IRB recommends that investigators engage interpreters who are unfamiliar to individual participants and from outside their community.

In some cases, University students may be willing to serve as translators, interpreters or both.

For research involving data that must be kept confidential, the interpreter must be willing to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided by the participant and should be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement as documentation of same.

The sensitivity of the data may necessitate that an interpreter cannot be used. For example collection of data of interest to factions in violent conflicts may make it difficult to ensure the confidentiality of information provided through an interpreter.

***A guide to selecting translation services can be found at the American Translators Associate web site at [www.atanet.org/Getting\\_it\\_right.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/Getting_it_right.pdf).***