Application Number: 2010N5078

Response to Reviewers:  
  
Please see the comments below and submit revisions to your application by uploading revised documents that track the changes in Microsoft Word, along with a document that details how you addressed these concerns, item by item. I have attached my revised documents and highlighted my changes in yellow. \*In particular, please clarify the status of the participants, as it seems unclear as to whether they are currently incarcerated. I have hopefully clarified that the participants are NOT incarcerated, but rather residents of a homeless shelter who have been released from jail recently. I do not know their formal legal status, i.e., parole, probation, etc., but the program is strictly voluntary and has no legal affiliation with the court system, but is collaborating with the homeless shelter to provide opportunities for additional therapeutic/psychosocial service through the RNI program.  
  
02/02/11 15:07:34   
Given the information available in the current synopsis, I agree with the researcher that this project is of greater potential benefit than harm. However, I also concur with reviewer 2 that more information is needed before this project can be approved.   
  
Most importantly, I would like to see more of the questions that will be asked during the interview. DONE—they are now included on the consent form AND in my synopsis. I understand that the open ended nature of the interview may mean that not all questions can be foreseen at this stage as the direction of the interview may change slightly based upon participants\' responses. However, more information on the planned questions is still needed before the risk can be accurately assessed.  
  
Second, I am not sure I understand who these potential participants are and what connection they still have with the prison system or the guards. If they are still currently prisoners (they are NOT currently prisoners, but I marked ‘prisoners’ on the application form due to their ambiguous legal status and past criminal history) or will likely have future interactions with guards or other prisoners (no, they will not) then I agree with reviewer 2 that more information on protection of confidentiality is needed. However, the synopsis says that none are currently incarcerated. Is the RNI program itself voluntary? Yes, the RNI program is 100% voluntary. It is for residents of the homeless shelter (which serves many formerly incarcerated individuals) a chance for a new start, the opportunity to develop new life/work skills, personal growth, etc.)  
  
The consent form states that the interview may still be given for RNI\'s use as a program evaluation even if it is not reported in scholarly journals. Would this interview be given in the same way to the same people even if this was not done for research purposes? (Yes, the interview would be done the same. I have been asked to be on the Advisory Council for RNI, and would like to use the findings from these interviews to help GPRC/RNI develop a more effective program based on first-hand participant data.) as I think that may have bearing on the risk-benefit analysis.  
  
The letter of support from the program states that all pictures taken will belong to them. Will pictures be taken? NO, pictures will not be taken by this researcher. Pictures are not mentioned in the proposal or consent.  
  
I believe the description of benefits in the consent form may be overstated. It currently states, \"the benefits of participating in this study are high\". However, I think it may be more accurate to say, \"You might find this interview to be of some benefit to you because...\" DONE—good point!  
  
The emotional risk is rated as being a 7 which, given the sample questions, seems high to me. However, if the more complete list of questions does warrant such a high risk rating then I think a more concrete plan for protecting against the risk of psychological/emotional stress may be needed. Specifically, a list of at least 3 sources of support or counseling must be provided. Again, this would only seem to be necessary (to me at least) if the questions you plan to ask are substantially more emotionally challenging than the consent form samples. I don’t think they are ‘substantially’ more emotionally challenging, but from my experience getting people to talk about the change process can elicit strong emotional reactions; however, maybe I my assessment of the risk rating number is too high. I will let you all decide that, and you can let me know if I need to provide counseling referral information. Given that there is a group worker on staff with RNI who has been working with participants during the course of the program, I feel they have the built-in psychological support they need. Please let me know if you disagree.  
  
I do believe this is a potentially interesting study that could be approved once the additional information is provided. I wish the researcher the best of luck in this important line of work.  
  
02/01/11 10:05:38   
How will you insure that the guards will not know who participated and who did not? N/A—they are NOT incarcerated. Even though you insure that the survey is private the fact that they participate or not could lead to mistreatment by guards. This study will only be approved if there is a failsafe plan or method to insure non-participation is completely hidden.  
  
Please include a complete list of the open ended questions you intend to ask the participant. DONE—I have included them all as sample questions in both the synopsis and the consent form.  
  
The location and length of time the survey data and audio recordings etc. will be kept must be explicitly stated on the consent form. DONE You stated that the audio recordings will be deleted after transcription; how long do you expect that to be? Within a month of the interviews, which I’ve noted on the consent form.  
  
Please lower the reading level of the consent form to a 5th to 8th grade level, preferably 5th. It is noted that you say in the consent form that you will explain wording the participant doesn’t understand but there are too many for them to ask.  Good point—thank you for pointing this out. I guess I got caught up in ‘academic speak.’ Some examples of phraseology that is probably beyond the participant’s understanding are:   
-qualitative interviews  
-open ended questions  
-impact on your life  
-influential part of the program  
-deeper connection with nature  
-not be able to avoid compliance  
-life endeavors  
-anchor the change process