

## **Snowball Recruiting**

**Summary/Purpose:** Definition of snowball recruiting, its possible complications, and requirements for researchers.

**Definition of snowball recruiting:** Also called peer or network recruiting, snowball recruiting involves asking currently enrolled or potential research participants to recruit additional participants with similar attributes or qualities as those being studied.

**Types of recruitment:** Recruitment can happen in one of two ways.

1. A participant in a study can nominate someone by giving information to the investigator (who then contacts the nominee); or
2. A participant in a study can nominate someone by giving him/her information about the study and having the nominee contact the investigator.

**Possible complications:**

- A participant being recruited by a person in a position of authority may feel undue influence to participate in the research study because of the status of the nominator.
- Recruitment for studies involving sensitive subject matters or potentially embarrassing information *may* cause more than minimal risk to participants.
- Sensitive subject matters include but are not limited to medical or psychological diagnoses, illegal behavior, or sexual orientation.
- Subject matters such as occupation, leisure activities, or age likely do not involve increased risk to participants. See Third Party Research policy for more information.

**Requirements:**

- Type 1 recruitment:
  - Researchers should ask participants whether they would be willing to nominate potential participants to complete the study. This script must be included with the IRB application.
  - Researchers should obtain a nominating participant's consent to reveal the participant's identity to nominees.
- Type 2 recruitment:
  - Researchers should ask participants whether they would be willing to pass on some information about the study to other potential participants. This script must be included with the IRB application.
  - Researchers should give participants an information sheet that they can pass on to people they think may be qualified and interested in participating in the study. This information sheet must be included with the IRB application.

## The University of Mississippi

For all snowball recruitment strategies, researcher should make sure participants are aware that they do not have to recruit anyone and will not be penalized for declining to do so. This script must be included with the IRB application.