

PRACTICE

Ethics and Equity

As explained in the Ethics Resource, The Belmont Report summarizes fundamental ethical principles for behavioral and biomedical research involving human subjects in the United States, and is the main organizing framework for Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). It outlines three main principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. This activity provides questions that can help you think through the ethical design of your evaluation.

Respect for Persons says that we must respect and protect the autonomy of individuals. A large piece of this principle involves ensuring informed consent. In particular, it calls researchers to:

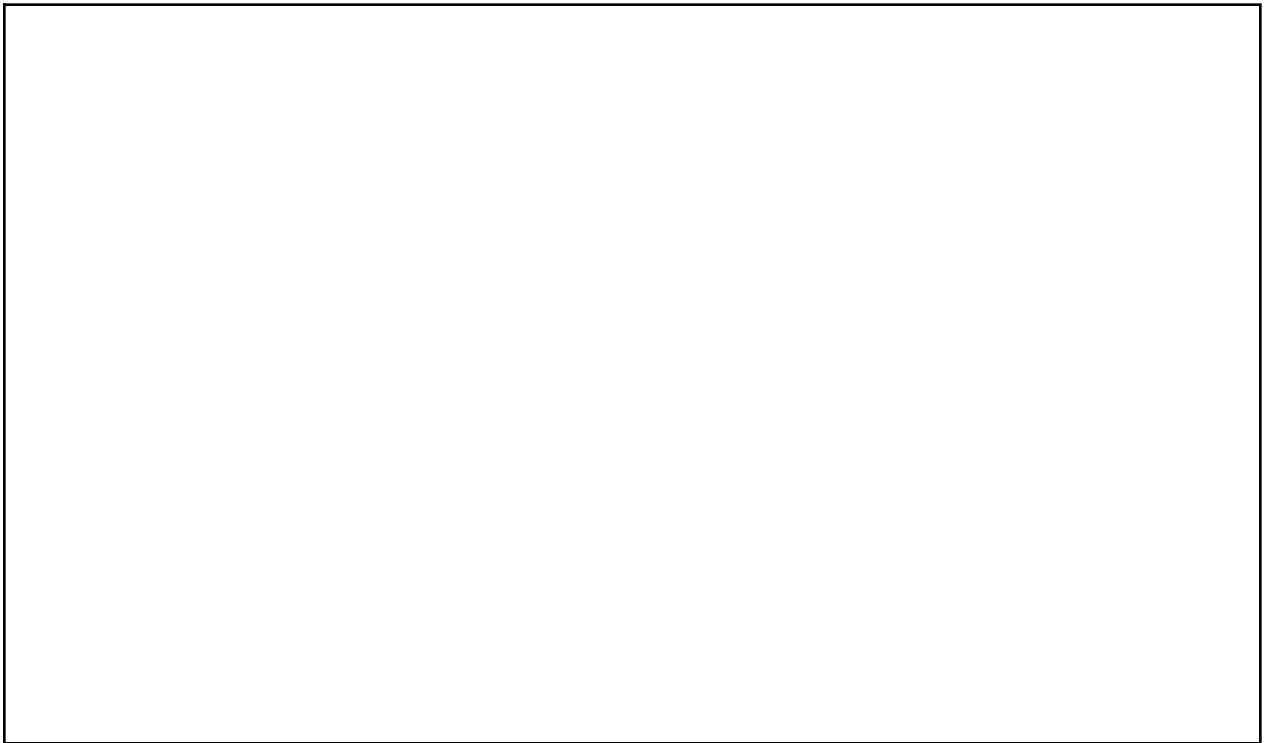
- Provide sufficient *information* for people to make informed decisions,
- Ensure prospective participants *comprehend* the information provided, and
- Ensure participation is *voluntary* and free of undue influence or coercion.

How would you approach addressing the requirements of informed consent in your context? Be sure to also consider whether any groups or individuals are entitled to additional protection.

Beneficence refers to minimizing harm while maximizing benefits.

As you consider the following questions, remember to think about all stakeholders involved (e.g., participants, program staff, researchers, target population, wider community, etc.)

What are some benefits of your potential evaluation? How might you maximize these?



What are some potential harms you may be risking? How could you minimize these?



Justice refers to a fair distribution of risks and benefits. No one group should bear all the risks while another reaps all of the benefits.

Again, as you consider the following questions, remember to think about all stakeholders involved (e.g., participants, program staff, researchers, target population, wider community, etc.)

What are some ways you can help ensure the project adheres to the principle of justice?

Consider:

- Are your program participants representative of the larger population experiencing similar challenges?
- How would you ensure that others—in addition to your program participants—can benefit from the findings of your study?

EQUITY

In addition to the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report, it is critical to consider the equity implications of your program.

How would you approach evaluation design with the pursuit of equity in mind? It may be helpful to reflect on the following questions:

- Is the target population of your program and evaluation a marginalized group? Could there be any additional risks associated with targeting this group?
- Might the program affect some groups differently than others? Are you interested in being able to measure these differences?