

Stanford University <b>HRPP</b> Guidance	<b>Parental Permission for Children in School Based Studies</b>	GUI-45
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When investigators are conducting research in school settings, obtaining permission is often done by mailing or sending home a copy of the parental permission form with the child. Investigators sometimes want to use an "opt-out process" – also referred to as “passive consent” – where the parental permission form indicates that the parent(s) should respond only if the parent(s) does **not** want their child to participate in a school activity. (E.g., schools commonly use this process for students to opt-out of sex education classes.)

**For research purposes, an opt-out process or passive consent does not satisfy the regulatory requirement to obtain parental permission for participation in research. Depending on a study’s purpose and risks, federal regulations state that the IRB can either:**

- **require signed parental permission,**
- **approve parental permission with a waiver of documentation (signature), or**
- **approve a full [waiver of consent](#).**

In addition to regulatory criteria for a waiver of documentation or full waiver of consent, the following should be considered:

- Is the age of the child in the study appropriate? (It may not be appropriate to waive documentation or waive consent for younger children, but may be for high school students.)
- Are the research procedures similar to those that are typically undergone in a school setting.
- Is the study subject to the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) or the [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment](#) (PPRA); if yes, then signed parental permission may be required.

**If signed parental permission is required,** you must get permission from the parent(s). The parental permission form can be mailed, emailed or sent home with the child. A signed form must be received from the parent before any research procedures can begin. If the signed permission form is not received, the child must be excluded from the study.

**If a waiver of documentation is approved,** there must still be a prospective consent process and the parent must make an active choice for their child to participate. E.g., they are emailed the parental permission form and are given a link to click “Yes” or “No” to state if their child can participate.

Resources:

[GUI-C24: Children and Consenting Minors - Consent and Assent; Mandatory Reporting](#)

[GUI-C34: Parental Permission](#)

[HRPP Policy Manual](#), Chapter 12.5.1

Consent forms and templates: [Medical](#) and [Nonmedical](#)