

Parental Consent Policy for Idaho Substance Abuse Prevention Programs Serving Minors

September 30, 2005

Overview

Benchmark's Parental Consent Policy is designed to protect minors participating in the outcome survey process. The information to be included in the Parental Consent is outlined below and is designed to fully inform parents/legal guardians of their minor's rights before, during, and after survey administration.

Prevention Providers **cannot survey** a minor without first obtaining a signed Parental Consent. A signed Parental Consent must be in-hand BEFORE that minor is given an outcomes survey. A minor who does not have a signed Parental Consent cannot participate in the outcomes survey administration.

This requirement is designed to comply with federal and state laws, and fulfill a Prevention Provider's ethical obligation to obtain consent when collecting personal information from a minor. **HOWEVER, a minor's participation in your program should in NO WAY be affected by whether or not they participate in the outcomes survey.** Parents MUST be made aware that their minor's participation in the outcomes process is completely VOLUNTARY. Prevention Providers should not penalize participants for choosing not to participate in the outcomes survey.

The manner in which you administer the outcomes survey should be consistent with the information outlined in the Parental Consent. The commitments made to parents/legal guardians must be upheld during outcomes survey administration. There are brief explanations for each Parental Consent requirement that will help you consistently and ethically administer your surveys. The outcomes survey administration manual can be located on PreventionIdaho.net under the Outcomes Evaluation link.

The policy requirements in italics below must be included in your Parental Consent document; however, you are not required to use the language verbatim. We have provided sample Parental Consents for your reference and use that should help to incorporate the policy requirements (available on PreventionIdaho.Net under the Outcomes Evaluation link. In addition, the minor's themselves must be fully informed before taking an outcomes survey. Therefore, the information below should be verbally relayed to participants BEFORE each survey (pretest and posttest) is administered.

The consent requirements should be followed consistently and with due diligence. A certification will need to be signed by each Provider Administrator acknowledging the responsibilities of their program and all staff to comply with this policy. Prevention Providers can obtain the certification on PreventionIdaho.net under the Outcomes Evaluation link.

If you have any questions or require technical assistance, Benchmark's administrative staff and Regional Managers are ready assist you.

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Consent Policy Requirements

1. *The survey results are strictly CONFIDENTIAL. At no time will the participant's name be reported with his/her responses.*

Access to the individual surveys will be restricted to the Provider Administrator, Data Administrator and the Prevention Provider staff DIRECTLY involved with outcomes survey administration. Non-prevention provider staff, including parents, teachers and general public will NOT have access to participant's responses. Identifying information on the outcomes survey is solely to allow the data entry staff to match a minor's pretest and posttest answers. Collected surveys should be placed in sealed envelopes and only opened for the purpose of data entry. Once the data are entered into the data system the surveys must be stored in a locked and secure location. Individual participant surveys should never be shared with or discussed with anyone. The individual assigned to data entry should be the only person with access to the completed outcomes surveys.

2. *The data collected will be reported in SUMMARY form only.*

Any reports generated from the surveys will be reported in summary form only, including, but not limited to, reports to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), reports to the individual Prevention Provider, reports to the RSAA, and reports to the State. There will be no way to identify individuals and their responses from the reports.

3. *The surveys are VOLUNTARY. Participation in the outcomes survey is NOT a requirement for participating in the Prevention Program and the participant's standing will not be affected by choosing not to participate.*

There is no penalty for not taking a survey. More importantly, Prevention Providers MUST inform both parent and minor that taking the surveys is NOT a requirement to being in the program and will in no way affect participation in the program. The obligation to adequately relay this information requires special diligence, especially when Prevention Providers are viewed by minors as authority figures. Prevention Providers, especially those in a school setting, are in a position of power over the participants; any Provider (or their staff) who is administering surveys must clearly understand that participation is not required and that declining to participate has NO penalty.

4. *The participant has the right to refuse to answer any or all questions on the outcomes survey. They may leave questions blank without explanation or without penalty.*

Even if you have received a signed Parental Consent and the minor is willing to complete an outcomes survey, that minor does not have to answer all of the questions. They may choose to leave questions blank or may quit in the middle of the survey. Prevention Providers should NOT request that participants, who have left questions blank, complete their responses, and should NOT coerce participants to finish the survey if they choose to leave any or all items blank. Providers (or their staff) should NOT review surveys for incomplete responses during survey time. All surveys should be picked up at the same time and placed immediately into a sealed envelope and securely stored until time to enter the data into PreventionIdaho.Net.

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5. *A purpose statement must be included informing parents why you will be administering outcomes surveys and outlining the types of questions that will be asked.*

Your Parental Consent must include a statement about the purpose of the outcomes survey. The consent must further describe the types of questions the minor will be asked, ESPECIALLY if the questions are about any of the following topics: alcohol/drugs, alcohol/drug use, knowledge of alcohol/drugs, attitudes towards alcohol/drugs, friends' and families' attitudes towards alcohol/drugs and their alcohol/drug use, any issues regarding sex or violence, and any other topic that could be considered highly personal or intrusive.

6. *Parents must be informed whether there are any known discomforts or risks associated with participating in these outcomes surveys.*

For our purposes, all Prevention Providers can state that "There are no known discomforts or risks associated with participating in these surveys." Providers should include this statement within their Parental Consent to inform parents that the outcomes surveys are not anticipated to do any harm to the minor.

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