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Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to:

Provide clear guidance on the use of snowball recruitment and its considerations for proper

Method 2: Snowball Recruitment: Researcher Contacts Potential Participant

This form of snowball sampling involves asking current participants to provide the names and contact information of referrals so that researchers can contact them directly. Typically, this is the more useful option for researchers. However, it can be problematic when the recruitment criteria involve sensitive information, possibly breaching referrals' privacy, or when referrals are likely to be sensitive about being contacted directly (e.g., police, military, etc.). In such cases, current participants need to obtain referrals' permission to provide their contact information to researchers.

At a minimum, researchers must indicate where they obtained referrals' contact information from (consistent with any recruitment that involves contacting participants directly) when contacting referrals. This means revealing the participant's identity to those whose names they provide. The participants must consent to this (e.g., it must be described in the LOI and a check box to indicate "yes, you may reveal my identity to those participants I have referred"). In certain situations, there may be ethical reasons not to reveal this information. Researchers need to justify this in their application. If this type of snowball recruitment is used, the researcher needs to include the recruitment script for such referrals in the ethics application.

Important Considerations

Current participants cannot receive any compensation for providing referrals or be offered any incentives to provide referrals.

Current participants must not be required to refer others or incur any penalty for not referring other participants.