**Interviews and Ethics**

Interviewing sounds like an easy method to get information about a person. It’s just a conversation. In fact, it is one of the most difficult research methodologies to learn and to perform well. It takes a great deal of planning and extraordinary skills on the part of the interviewer. Like other research methods used with Human Subjects, the researcher must consider five basic ethical issues:

1. Confidentiality – Respondent confidentiality should inform the design, collection, analysis, reporting, and storage of interview data. The interviewee/respondent/informant will be sharing personal information. The interviewer/investigator/researcher needs to explain the kinds of questions that will be asked, how the data will be used, reported and stored or destroyed.
2. Informed Consent – When a respondent agrees to an interview, they are giving consent to obtain data. The respondent should be told if you intend to quote them. Some may wish to be anonymous others may want you to identify them. If the interview will be recorded (audio, video, film) they must consent to the recording as well as the interview.
3. Risks – The researcher should consider all potential risks and note those risks in the consent process. Even though the interview may be informal, two people just “talking” about a topic, you must consider the consequences of using collected data and the ramifications for the subject.
4. Benefits – Are there any benefits for the respondent? How does the person that takes time to give you information benefit from the interview itself or the product of the research? Will they or their community benefit in some way? Will they get a copy of the final product? Have you promised them anything? Keep all promises!
5. Issues regarding minors or other protected groups. Interviewing minors requires the informed consent of the parent or guardian as well as the assent of the minor. “Kids say the darndest things” including information that may legally require a researcher to report to a legal authority. (Child endangerment, abuse, neglect, etc.) Guardian consent is also required for adults who are unable to consent for themselves.