



Recruitment Innovation Unit

Recruitment Strategies and Best Practices

Here are useful tips and best practices for recruitment

1. Create a Clear Recruitment and Retention Strategy

- Budget for the costs of recruitment and retention. This includes effort for team members, costs associated with the Clinical Research Unit (CRU) compensation for participants, allocated funds for outreach through MyChart and social media service fees, materials for making and disseminating recruitment materials and signing individuals up (images, tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots (items for tabling at events)).
- Include a multi-pronged approach in the IRB application.
- Estimate a recruitment schedule and start early. Account for screen failures in your timeline.
- Raise awareness of the study using multiple channels like direct to participant materials as well as provider referral approaches. These include materials, email, phone calls, and social media to maximize reach.
- Collaborate with colleagues and the community so they help raise awareness for you.
- Help your team receive training: [Research Personnel Onboarding Program – Institute for Clinical and Translational Research](#)
- Consider your participants' needs and work to ensure they have a pleasant experience. Offer flexible study visit times and consider compensating participants for their time and inconvenience. Cover their transportation costs if applicable.
- Adapt as needed. Seek IRB amendments to optimize your recruitment plan.

Resources:

- [Research Personnel Onboarding Program – Institute for Clinical and Translational Research](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Clinical Research Units \(CRUs\) – Institute for Clinical and Translational Research](#)
- Johns Hopkins Study Visit Support: Scattersite Research Nurses Research Services:
Contact Mary De’Jarnette: mdejarn1@jh.edu
- [ICTR Research Coordinator Support Service \(RCSS\)](#) (Research coordinators who can be hired part-time through the RCSS receive training in clinical skills, including phlebotomy)
- [Medical Call Answering Service Company | Healthcare Call Center](#)
- [Trial Innovation Network Webinars and Events](#)
- [TIN Toolbox – Trial Innovation Network](#)

2. Develop Engaging Messaging

- Know your audience. Customize your materials and outreach to reflect them, their preferences and communication habits. “What may motivate them to join the study?” The three most common motivations for participation are to obtain care/knowledge about their health, to obtain compensation, and/or to help others with their health condition. Communicate how your study may address their motivating objectives and highlight how participants could benefit from the study (if possible). Include a clear study purpose and how it relates to their health.
- Use plain language to create messages that avoid jargon, are informative, empathetic, and relevant to the participant’s health concerns or interests. Messages should be 5th-6th grade reading level.
- Create multiple versions of flyers and messages as needed to reflect the diversity of participants.
- Highlight the impact participants will have on research.
- Be upfront about study details, including purpose, procedures, time commitment, and privacy protections. Include enough information for participants to make informed decisions/understand if the study might be the right fit for them.
- Use easy to understand language such as ‘able to join’ rather than ‘eligible’
- Use the term ‘research study’ rather than ‘trial’ unless you describe that term in plain language.
- Be concise.

Resources:

- [RIC Recruitment Retention Materials Content + Design Toolkit](#)
- [Guide to Clinical Trial Informational Videos from the Recruitment Innovation Center](#)
- [Health Literacy | Health Literacy | CDC](#)
- Free images:
 - [Pexels](#)
 - [Webdamdb](#) Sign in with single sign on to find potentially useful images.
 - [iStock](#) Allows you a limited number of downloads for free but can be upgraded to a paid membership for unlimited downloads.
 - [JHU Welch Medical Library Resource](#)

3. Utilize Digital Recruitment Tools

- Use patient portal messaging like [MyChart](#) and recruitment platforms like [ResearchMatch](#) and other local registries to share study information and allow potential participants to share their contact information with you.
- Leverage social media and online communities to reach potential participants.
- Ensure your study contact and recruitment status information is up to date on the new [Johns Hopkins Medicine Clinical Trials Search Engine](#) and ClinicalTrials.gov site and ClinicalTrials.gov site.

Resources:

- [MyChart Recruitment Service](#)
 - [MyChart Message Template](#)
- [JHU Digital Signage guidelines and resource links](#)
- [How to Use ResearchMatch TIN Toolkit](#)
- [Recruitment Innovation Center Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [How to Use Canva YouTube Tutorial](#)

4. Build Support from Doctor/Clinics and Community

- Engage and collaborate with healthcare providers and community members and organizations who interact with people who may be eligible, interested, and could benefit from the study.
- Take advantage of JHU engagement training and resources.
- Provide study information to clinics and organizations such as recruitment flyers and information sheets.

- Explain the study to the staff and ask if they could help to make connections for you. If amenable, ask them to help explain the study's relevance to patients/clients. Consistent communication and follow-up with providers is key. Do not ask for too much. Expect to do the bulk of the awareness raising yourself.
- Share digital links to the study materials for them to pass on. Consider a YouTube video of the PI explaining the study.
- Be proud of your studies and the work you are doing! Have a short pitch to explain why you are doing the research. Share study information in your emails, in prescreening surveys, in your email signature, etc.
- Maintain open lines of communication and encourage questions to build rapport and foster participant trust.

Resources:

- [Collaborations – Institute for Clinical and Translational Research](#)
- [RIC Referring Providers Outreach Guide.docx](#)

5. Community Involvement in Recruitment

- Consider establishing an advisory board to work with through all phases of your study. Listen to their guidance.
- Attend local events, health fairs, and gatherings to listen, be present, and to share information directly with the community.
- Collaborate with community organizations, clinics, and advocacy groups to help spread awareness and endorse research studies.
- Request a [Community Engagement Consultation](#)
- Work with community members to create recruitment materials that resonate culturally and linguistically with the target population.

Resources:

- [Johns Hopkins Community Engagement Community and Collaboration Core](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Community Research Advisory Council](#)
- [AAMC Center for Health Justice Principles of Trustworthiness](#)

6. Practice Effective Public Engagement – How to “Table”

The ICTR facilitates [Day@Market](#) and other events in the local area. Here are some best practices for effective public engagement during community health fairs or similar outreach events:

- **Be Approachable and Friendly**
 - Smile and Make Eye Contact: This shows openness and approachability.
 - Stand in Front of the Table: Instead of sitting behind the table, standing at the front creates a more inviting posture.
 - Avoid Clustering with Team Members: Spread out so visitors can feel comfortable approaching without interrupting group conversations.
- **Engage with Curiosity and Respect**
 - Ask Open-Ended Questions: Simple questions like, “What brings you to the fair today?” or “Have you heard about this program?” encourages dialogue.
 - Listen Actively: Show genuine interest in what community members share. Nod, maintain eye contact, and give verbal affirmations.
 - Adjust to Your Audience: Pay attention to how much the visitor knows about the topic and change your message to fit their level. Match their understanding, whether they are new to your program or already know a lot about it.
- **Provide Clear, Friendly Information**
 - Have Brief Talking Points Ready: Quickly explain who you are and the program benefits in a few sentences.
 - Use Visual Aids and Simple Language: Flyers, brochures, and infographics should use plain language, avoiding jargon. Include visuals that reflect the study participants, are eye-catching and easy to understand.
- **Create a Welcoming Atmosphere**
 - Offer Takeaways: Providing brochures, flyers, or small branded items encourages people to approach.
 - Maintain an Open Table Layout: Keep materials organized and easy to see, so people feel they can browse.
- **Be Mindful of Body Language and Presentation**
 - Keep Your Posture Open: Avoid crossing your arms, looking at your phone, or turning your back to visitors. Instead, keep your posture open and attentive.

Resources:

- [ICTR Recruitment Innovation Unit Consult](#)
- Vendors for study branded items:

- Target Marketing Group
 - Point of Contact
 - Hanniel Lesada - hlesada@tmgroup.com
- Allegra Printing (formerly Curry Printing)
 - Point of Contact
 - Margie Mazurek- margie@allegrabaltimore.com
 - Also, a Mailing house vendor
- Taylor Healthcare
 - Point of Contact
 - Susan Goetz - susan.goetz@taylor.com
 - Steven Korenicki - steven.korenicki@taylor.com
- [RIU Farmers Market Initiative](#)
 - To join us at one of our farmers market appearances, please contact Tosin Tomiwa at otomiwa1@jhu.edu.
 - To have your flyers displayed at our stand, submit your request here: <https://mrprcbcw.hosts.jhmi.edu/redcap/surveys/?s=DR3XD38CX3MCRA1>
- [Day@Market](#)
 - For more information about this program, please contact Lensa Keno at lkeno1@jh.edu.

6. Foster Participant Retention, a Good Study Experience, and Compliance

- Provide participants with clear instructions (in addition to the consent) to help the participant understand and remember key study dates, interventions, instructions, and study contact information.
- Use reminder emails, calls, or text messages to keep potential participants engaged and informed about important dates.
- Be mindful of timing and frequency to avoid overwhelming participants but keep them involved.
- Let them know you remember them- examples include sending personalized birthday cards, holiday cards, etc.

Resources:

- [JHU REDCap](#)

7. Encourage Feedback from Participants

- Encourage participant feedback at various stages and address any concerns they raise.
- Provide clear updates and show appreciation for their involvement to enhance retention and satisfaction.
- Disseminate your findings to research participants.

Resources:

- [RIC Templates for Sharing Study Results](#)