

Interviews, like all evaluation methods, have ethical standards to follow. Due to the personal, conversational nature of interviews, five basic ethical issues should be considered as you plan:

- 1) **Confidentiality** – Because the respondent is sharing personal information, explain how you intend to use the data provided. Be honest with the level of confidentiality you can promise. Keep respondent confidentiality at the forefront when you analyze the data.
- 2) **Informed Consent** – By agreeing to an interview, the respondent is giving you consent to obtain data from him or her. Obtaining consent is critical when considering how you wish to use the data. If you wish to use a quote or testimonial, receive permission to use the individual's name or ask if it can be stated anonymously. Depending on the topic, you may want to consider obtaining consent in written format. If children are involved, their parent or legal guardian must provide permission.
- 3) **Risk Assessment** – Consider all potential risks of the interview and include them in the informed consent. Although the interview may very well be an informal conversation where two people are “just talking” about a specific topic, it is important to consider the consequence of using the data collected, especially if its use can incur negative ramifications to the respondent.
- 4) **Promises/Reciprocity** – What is the benefit to the respondent? It is important to consider what the benefits will be for individuals who take time to provide you with information. Will they or the community they live in benefit in some way from the results? Will they receive a copy of the final report, thank you card, etc.? If you promise something...keep it.
- 5) **Special Issues Regarding Minors** – Interviewing minors has a host of special ethical issues including, but not limited to, informed consent of the parent or guardian. If interviewing minors is something you are considering, it is imperative that you take the necessary steps to insure that appropriate permission has been obtained and that those minors participating fully understand what it is they are participating in.

Adapted from the text: *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*,  
Patton, M.Q. (1990)