

Using Snowball Sampling to Recruit Participants

Snowball sampling is a recruitment technique in which research participants are asked to assist researchers in recruiting additional participants. This recruitment technique asks currently enrolled research participants to help researchers identify other potential participants.

The BSU IRB does not recommend using a snowball sampling due to individuals' privacy. Instead, it is recommended to use reverse snowball sampling in which participants are asked to forward study information to potential participants.

IRB Recommendation

Use reverse snowball sampling!

When using "snowball sampling" with already enrolled research participants, the IRB strongly recommends that participants be asked to **forward study information to potential participants** allowing them to contact the researcher directly rather than providing names and contact information of potential participants.

Snowball Samping	Reverse Snowball Sampling
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•PI asks enrolled participants to give them the contact information of potential participants.•BSU IRB does not recommend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•PI asks enrolled participants to forward study information and PI contact information to potential participants.•BSU IRB recommends.

Obtain permission before sharing contact information!

If reverse snowball sampling not feasible, the study team member may ask enrolled participants to obtain permission from others prior to disclosing their contact information. In this case, the researcher would not directly contact the referred/potential participants and would not have access to any information about potential participants without permission from that individual.

Other considerations

1. Let participants know that they will be asked to assist recruitment in addition to participation. It should be notified that they have the right to decline.
2. Provide the IRB with a script detailing how the researcher will be recruiting using snowball sampling.
3. You may want to consider an alternative recruitment strategy. However, if you want to use snowball sampling, you must provide a strong justification in the IRB application.