Some common mistakes made in filling out IRB applications

• Graduate students need to be listed as co-investigators for any thesis or dissertation. It is not sufficient to be listed as data analyzers or key research personnel. Also, if the hypotheses indicate different methods or analyses than the original approval (particularly if it is a borrowed data set) then the student may have to file a separate IRB application.

• Rationale for Expedited Review: The rationale should specifically mention how the proposal meets the criteria. Needing it in a hurry is not an acceptable rationale. Be sure also to explain why it is minimal risk.

• Lay Summary: Clearly and simply describe the procedures. This should include why the research is being done and how it will be conducted and analyzed (not specific statistical tests, just what will be done). Please explain. It is extremely important that the summary be written in non-technical language. For example, instead of "affect", say "mood" or "emotion". Eliminate all traces of specialty area buzz words or acronyms such as "cognitive dissonance", "DSM-IV", or "priming".

• Often the benefits and risks are omitted. *It is okay not to have direct benefits to the participants as long as the risk-benefit ratio is acceptable.*

• Subject population: The number of subjects requested should be realistic. The number should include a reasonable replacement amount for dropouts but not an astronomically high number. If you do have a high number of subjects, please be sure to add a justification (high drop out rate, sampling returns are unknown).

• Never indicate that the reason you are excluding non-English speakers is because you do not have the resources to include those populations. This is not a sufficient reason (except for pilot work). Acceptable reasons are scientifically justifiable only (measures not validated in other languages, English speaking is central to the study, etc)

• Recruitment procedures must be specific. How, when, and where should be spelled out exactly. All recruiting materials (fliers, newspaper or Internet ads, posters, etc.) must be submitted and approved by the IRB.

• Risks and Benefits: Risks are not only actual but potential. Is it foreseeable that someone may experience discomfort? No matter how remote the possibility, if it exists then it should be listed. Be sure to list all potential risks. This should be reflected in your consent documentation as well as in the application.

• Confidentiality of the Data: Be as specific as possible about how long the data will be kept, where the data will be kept, and who will have access to the data. The IRB has the right to review records at any time. The exception would be anonymous responses without documentation of consent.

• Consent Forms:
  Leave a 2"x2" space at the bottom of the document for the IRB stamp

• Remove witness signatures for any literate populations.