

Title: Waivers of Parental Permission for Research with Gay and Lesbian Adolescents

Author: Emily Anderson (based on a case in Kimberly Hoagwood, Peter S. Jensen, and Celia B. Fisher, *Ethical Issues in Mental Health Research with Children and Adolescents*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996)

Description: Researchers seek a waiver of parental/guardian consent for a study examining psychosocial stressors and anxiety and depressive disorders in gay and lesbian adolescents.

Headings: Special Populations and Cultural Competence; Minors (children, adolescents); Decision-Making Capacity, Assent, and Surrogate Permission; Waiver of parental permission; Privacy and Confidentiality

Case Type: Decision making

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Investigators propose a study to examine psychosocial stressors and the prevalence of anxiety disorders and depression in adolescent gay and lesbian adolescents. In order to obtain a large enough sample size, they plan to recruit participants through a gay and lesbian community center.

Center staff members are enthusiastic about the project. However, they inform the investigators that most of the students who come into the center have not told their parents about their sexual orientation. The researchers believe that getting parental consent to participate in the study is not in the best interest of these adolescents because notifying the parents of the purpose of the study might place the child at risk for psychological or physical harm. Center staff agree.

As an IRB member, would you grant a waiver of parental permission for this study? What other safeguards, if any, would you recommend?

See Hoagwood et al. (1996) for a discussion of how this case was addressed by the researchers.