

We are running a pretty safe treatment trial for 72 adults. Our IRB approved us to recruit adults aged above 18 years. After we did a recruitment among psychology students (above age 18), the IRB changed its rules with respect to students, and retrospectively reversed their approval of our recruitment, so we had to throw away everything we had collected, and resubmit our recruitment plan. They then went through all of our recruitment materials with a fine tooth comb. We had to take out any questions involving ever having had a suicidal ideation, or abuse of alcohol or drugs. The IRB takes the position that the students might be harmed by having their behavior brought to their attention. We are now in a position that if any of our student subjects has a problem with suicide, drugs, or alcohol during the study, we will not have protected them by excluding them according to our original grant application. Here is a case in which the IRB has actually put human subjects at risk (but only if they are students).