

25.8 Oral History

A decision whether oral history or other activities solely consisting of open ended qualitative type interviews are subject to the policies and regulations outlined in an institution's FWA and DHHS regulations for the protection of human research subjects (45 CFR 46) is based on the prospective intent of the investigator and the definition of "research" under DHHS regulations at 45 CFR 46.102(d): "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."

Specifically, for the purposes of this policy, the evaluation of such activities hinges upon whether:

The activity involves a prospective research plan that incorporates data collection, including qualitative data, and data analysis to answer a research question; and

The activity is designed to draw general conclusions (i.e., knowledge gained from a study may be applied to populations outside of the specific study population), inform policy, or generalize findings.

In order to be subject to the University of Virginia human research protections policies, the activity must meet both of the above standards. This determination will be made according to the procedures described in Section 5 above.

General principles for evaluating Oral History activities:

1. Oral history activities, such as open ended interviews, that ONLY document a specific historical event or the experiences of individuals without intent to draw conclusions or generalize findings do not constitute "research" as defined by DHHS regulations 45 CFR 46.

Example: An oral history video recording of interviews with holocaust survivors is created for viewing in the Holocaust Museum. The creation of the video tape does not intend to draw conclusions, inform policy, or generalize findings. The sole purpose is to create a historical record of specific personal events and experiences related to the Holocaust and provide a venue for Holocaust survivors to tell their stories.

2. Systematic investigations involving open-ended interviews that are designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (e.g., designed to draw conclusions, inform policy, or generalize findings) would constitute "research" as defined by DHHS regulations at 45 CFR 46.

Example: An open ended interview of surviving Gulf War veterans to document their experiences and to draw conclusions about their experiences, inform policy, or generalize findings.

Investigators are advised to consult with the IRB Office regarding whether their oral history project requires IRB review.