

Informed Consent Form

Study Information:

Title of Study: Girls on the Autism Spectrum: Improving Recognition and Support Systems in Schools

Researcher: Jessica Ford

Institution: Concordia University, Saint Paul

Contact Information: fordj3@csp.edu; 612-486-2556

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Girls on the Autism Spectrum: Improving Recognition and Support Systems in Schools that aims to explore the barriers faced in qualifying girls for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) services, gather potentially identifying characteristics and behaviors of girls on the autism spectrum, and collect data on the types of training and practices that participants find effective in enhancing outcomes for students on the autism spectrum. The study is being conducted by Jessica Ford, a doctoral student at Concordia University, Saint Paul. Below you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in this study. Please read this document and reach out with any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the barriers, identifying characteristics, and effective practices related to Grade 2-6 girls on the autism spectrum in special education services. By exploring the perspectives and experiences of special education teachers in Minnesota, I am aiming to improve the identification process, support strategies, and outcomes for girls on the autism spectrum in educational settings.

Why have I been asked to participate in this study?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a current or former special education teacher in Minnesota with experience working with girls on the autism spectrum in Grades 2-6. Your insights and experiences are valuable in understanding the barriers, identifying characteristics, and effective practices related to girls on the autism spectrum receiving special education services. Your participation will contribute to advancing knowledge and help inform future educational practices and policies.

If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online interview. The interview will be conducted via a virtual platform and will be audio-recorded and/or video-recorded for accurate data collection and analysis. The interview questions will focus on barriers in qualifying girls for special education services, identifying characteristics specific to girls on the autism spectrum, and effective training and practices for supporting these girls.

How long will the interview take?

The interview is expected to take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. **Can I withdraw from the study if I change my mind?**

Yes, your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without providing a reason. Withdrawing from the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits.

What are the benefits of my participation in this study?

By participating in this study, you will contribute to advancing knowledge regarding barriers, identifying characteristics, and effective practices for girls on the autism spectrum receiving special education services. Your insights and experiences may also help inform future educational practices and policies.

What are the risks of my participation in this study?

There are no anticipated physical risks associated with participation in this study. However, you may experience emotional discomfort when discussing sensitive topics related to girls on the autism spectrum. If you feel distressed during the interview, please inform me, the researcher and appropriate support resources will be provided.

What will you do with my information and interview responses, and how will you protect my privacy?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your identity will be kept anonymous throughout the research process, and any personally identifiable information will be removed or pseudonymized during data analysis and reporting. The data collected from you will be used solely for research purposes, and it will be analyzed and reported in a manner that ensures confidentiality and anonymity. The audio recordings and/or video recordings and any digital data will be securely stored in password-protected folders on a password-protected device only accessible to me as the researcher. The data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will not be shared with any third parties. Once I have completed writing the study results and analysis, I will permanently delete audio recordings and/or video recordings.

Could my information be used for future research?

No. Your data will not be used or distributed for future research purposes, even if de-identified, without gaining further consent from you.

Will there be any changes to the study once it begins?

If I, as the researcher, learn about new findings during this study that may influence your willingness to continue participating in this study, I will inform you of these findings.

How can I get more information?

If you have any questions, please email me at fordj3@csp.edu or text or leave me a message with your contact information at 612-486-2556. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, you are welcome to contact the Concordia University Institutional Review Board at irb@csp.edu.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided in this informed consent form, that you have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to your satisfaction, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I consent to participate in the study and agree to be audio-recorded and/or video-recorded.

My spoken consent affirms that I have read this information, my questions have been answered, and I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date of Consent: _____

Researcher's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date of Receipt: _____