

Better Practices for Participatory Research:

*Recommendations for Principal Investigators & Employers who hire Peer Research Assistants (PRAs)
From the Peers Examining Experiences in Research Study (PEERS)*

1 Avoid Tokenism

Hire more than one PRA in order to reflect the diversity of lived experience within communities being researched. This can help shift the balance between lived experience and academic experience on research teams.

2 Offer Relevant Trainings

PIs and PRAs should have access to trainings on diversity/inclusion, accessibility, sensitivity, management, conflict resolution, and facilitation. PRAs may want access to skills training to address gaps in education (e.g., computer skills) as well as training in research principles and procedures.

3 Create Favorable Work Environments & Conditions

Check in with PRAs regularly: provide opportunities to express concerns and give suggestions. Offer accommodations, address barriers, break down & reflect on power dynamics, and take meaningful steps to rectify harm when it occurs. Allyship is a verb and improvement is an ongoing process.

4 Respect Privacy

Don't disclose other people's private information or lived experience without their informed consent. Give PRAs control over their information and if/how they tell their own stories.

5 Provide Adequate Compensation

Compensate PRAs fairly and according to their needs. Cash payment may be needed as an alternative to banking (which may require IDs, negatively impact social assistance, and otherwise pose barriers). Cash is generally preferred over gift cards, as gift cards limit how people spend their income. Ensure the PRAs' compensation reflects and respects the specialized knowledge that comes from lived experience, as well as the intellectual and emotional labour required for the work.

6 Value PRA Expertise

PRAs contribute a combination of skills and lived experience that offer vital perspectives, insight, and input that enriches research, and yet they are often undervalued and under-utilized. Merely having PRAs on a project for their lived experience without fully engaging their expertise is a form of tokenism. Whenever possible, centre and uplift PRA contributions and follow PRA guidance. Foster enough safety and trust for honest feedback.

7 Do Not Stigmatize The Communities You Are Studying

Ensure research questions and materials are created with community input to avoid causing harm, spreading misinformation, and fueling distrust. Recognize that if your research is not benefiting the community in some way, your research runs the risk of exploiting communities.

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For more information please visit:

<https://www.lgbtqhealth.ca/projects/peersstudy.php>