Interacting with Parents

It is essential to be polite and professional at all times when interacting with parents, whether on the phone or in person.

ALWAYS:

- **Introduce yourself** by your first name when you greet parents. You should describe yourself as a research assistant.
- **Introduce anyone else in the room** who will be involved with the study or observing.
- **Act friendly, polite, and grateful.** Parents are doing us a favor by participating in studies with their children, and our first priority is making sure they are happy and feel they have contributed to our research. Thank them and let them know they are appreciated.
- **Respond to questions and concerns.** If you don’t know the answer to a parent’s question, tell them that you will get it for them. It is always better to ask someone than to take the risk of saying something false to the parent.
- **Make sure parents feel comfortable.** Wait for them to get settled before launching into an explanation of the study, and accompany them in the elevator or down the stairs when they leave. If a parent is not comfortable with the study, or wants to stop the study at any time, they should feel free to do so.
- **Make sure parents understand the information** on the consent form, so that they are giving informed consent. Be open to answering questions they may have or giving more detailed explanations of our studies.

NEVER:

- **Make parents feel pressured** into participating or continue with a study if they do not feel comfortable doing so.
- **Offer to hold a parent’s baby** while they are filling out the consent form or at any other time. They will ask you if they feel comfortable, but asking them might make them uncomfortable.
- **Use the word “experiment” or “test” - use “study” instead.**