

Informed Consent/ Permission Forms

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Any out-of-school activities requires that parents/guardians be well informed and able to give permission for their child to participate in the activities. The type of form recommended by MSBA Risk Management and widely used by many Manitoba School Boards is an Informed Consent. Informed consent is a written acknowledgement that the participant and his parents/guardians understand the risks inherent in an activity.

Another type of form that can be used is commonly known as a Waiver Form. A waiver is a legal document that relinquishes a known right, claim or privilege. In signing a waiver, the participants relinquish the pursuit of a claim whereas signing an informed consent is accepting the risks of participation in the activity.

In general, schools will not request waivers for regular school activities but only for some high-risk voluntary activities such as international travel. Informed consents should be used for voluntary activities that are higher risk than participation during an in-school activity. Such activities may include, swimming, skiing, field trips, work experience, etc. Schools should not send out for signature, restrictive 3rd party waiver language that removes negligence from the service provider.

As informed consent is generally accepted as the type of form to be used by schools in Manitoba, some simple guidelines should ensure proper execution.

- Give families advance notice. 30 days is a minimum amount of time for most activities.
- Give families an opportunity to read the informed consent and ask questions. An information meeting for families should be considered for overnight trips.
- Enforce a no signature policy and any unsigned form will mean no participation.
- Where possible, print the informed consent on a single piece of paper.
- Always check the informed consent form to ensure that none of the wording has been changed or crossed out and the form has been signed and dated.
- If the participant is over 18, they may sign their own forms but if under 18, their parent/guardian must sign.
- Do not collect any unnecessary information.
- The emergency contact person shall not be involved in the activity or on the same trip with the participant.
- All informed consent forms shall have the school logo at the top to clarify that the school is the organization promoting the event.
- Assumption of risks – explicit wording describing the physical risks of the activity needs to be tailored to the specific activity.



- Acknowledgement – asks the parent/guardian to confirm they have read and understood the risks and are willing to accept them.
- Signature box – includes signature, date, printed name of participant, and printed name and signature of parent/guardian.
- Schools should recognize that English or French are not spoken in all households and parents in this situation may need special notification that these documents are important, and they may need an explanation in their own language.
- An informed consent or waiver has a maximum life of one year and if an activity goes throughout the year, a new form is required at least once a year.
- Retention guidelines - informed consent for minors shall be retained for at least 2 years after the minor reaches the age of 18.
- Keep signed paper copies of informed consents in an organized filing system that would allow you to find them by activity date or event name if required. Scanned copies in PDF format that are labeled is acceptable for easy retrieval.

Informed consent forms should have clear, easy-to-read language and font size that will be appropriate for most readers. These documents must be printed on school letterhead and indicate the purpose for the out of school activity. Provide a clear description of any known or potential risks associated with participation in the activity. Also, describe any known or anticipated educational benefits for the school and participants.

