**Guidance**

**Research with Minors**

There is no age of consent in Ontario. If a child or an adolescent is capable of consenting (meaning that he/she can understand the information & appreciate the relevance of the decision being made), then he/she should be asked to sign the consent form and no parental consent is required.

If the child or adolescent is not capable to consent, parental consent and child assent should be obtained (see guidelines below).

Unlike consent, the purpose of child assent is to secure a child's agreement to participate in the research. Providing children with written as well as verbal information regarding research enhances their understanding and should be used. The form should include simple declarative statements that describe concretely the main features of the study procedures (e.g. What will they do to me? Why? Will it hurt?), and the voluntary nature of research participation (Do I have to?).

The following is a general guideline of additional considerations made across the age span:

1. **Children younger than age 7:**A simple verbal explanation of the study should be given with reassurances that they do not have to agree if they do not want to.
2. **Children between the ages of 7 & 13:** Informed voluntary assent should be obtained without pressure from parents or investigators. The form may or may not include a signature and co-signature.
3. **Children between the ages of 14 & 15:** A consent form written at a simple level should be used. The following should be explained: Study purpose, what procedures will be done, potential benefits / risks, an invitation to ask questions, and the right to withdraw from the study. A signature should be required.

**Children 16 years of age and older:** Generally, youth 16 years of age and older sign the consent form on their own behalf.