

What does the RSRB consider reasonable in terms of payment to subjects for participation?

Unfortunately, because the design and nature of research (including related ethical and legal concerns) can vary drastically, there are no definitive 'rules' about how much and in what form subjects should be paid for participation. Generally, determining subject payment should be approached from the perspective of compensating subjects for the time and inconvenience of completing study procedures, though this should also be evaluated within the context of the specific research study. What might be considered 'reasonable' to compensate one subject for 30 minutes of survey completion, for example, might not necessarily be equivalent to what might be 'reasonable' to compensate for 30 minutes of intense exercise testing.

When the Research Subjects Review Board (RSRB) reviews subject payments included in research protocols, they will primarily consider whether the amount and method of disbursement is coercive or presents undue influence. This could include providing significant cash payment for simple procedures accomplished in relatively short period of time, providing necessary standard of care clinical procedures that would normally be billed to an insurer (or to the subject) free-of-charge or at reduced rates, or offering additional compensation for procedures that are strictly routine care. Payments should be commensurate with the research procedure's complexity, risk level and completion time.

The RSRB will also consider whether the timing of disbursement is coercive or presents undue influence. Typically, for longitudinal research or research that requires multiple visits, payment to subjects should be pro-rated based on the study visits and/or procedures completed. Providing one-time, lump-sum payments for a study that is completed over the course of 5 study visits could induce subjects wishing to withdrawal to complete the study in order to receive payment. 'Bonus' payments for subjects who complete an entire study may be permissible, provided they aren't unnecessarily large or disproportionate to the nature of the research.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [OHSP Policy 703 Recruitment Materials and Subject Payment](#)
 - [OHSP Guideline for Subject Payment](#)
 - [OHSP Guideline for Payment to Peer Recruiters](#)
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