

Transcript: *iTHRIV Learning Shorts, Team Science with Community Partners: Characteristics of Effective Engagement*

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Deron Campbell, PhD: There's more to community engagement in team science than just adding a community member to your team. While these relationships may vary based on the approach or research question, effective partnerships share some key characteristics. First up is authentic partnerships. Authentic partnerships recognize and respect the value of each team member's perspective and are careful not to unintentionally use or take advantage of one partner over the other. This is incredibly important when protecting the safety of a community member. Authentic partnerships are also not a one-off meeting or conversation, they are an enduring relationship forged over time and with repeat reconnection. We're talking about a relationship that you can protect by following through on what you promise to do. It's just really about showing up. The relationship we're also talking about should be mutually beneficial. It's easy to see what community members add to the research but what do they get out of it? Make sure the benefits are not just one-sided, create value for them. Okay so let's talk about something Aretha was talking about and that's respect. I'll let you spell it out but respecting community member is vitally important and the community representative that you decide to add to your team brings a specific and important expertise to the team, so respect them. We also, within the relationship, want to respect community members lived experience. Community representation and the lived experience that they bring is perhaps one of the most valuable parts of a community member being a part of team science, because they are a specific subset of the population and provide a valuable lens to what you're doing. That expertise during all phases of research trials should be considered, as valuable as, the education that you the researcher have received. Respect also takes form of compensation. All team members should be paid for their time and contributions. Who doesn't like money? Now the cousin to respect is trust. To truly solicit a community partner's perspective, they need to be confident that their voice will be heard and considered. Don't engage in token representation.

Now, let's talk about the cousin to respect which is accountability. When a community member endorses or partners with a scientific research team, they are gifting you with their social capital and putting their reputation and safety on the line. It is up to you to honor that gift by being considerate kind and reliable. Doing what you say that you're going to do and showing up, goes a long way. And don't just jump in there without knowing anything, knowledge about your community is the best thing that you can do before you start your research study. Do your homework. Many community members do not trust research, health systems, or even doctors and it's not hard to understand why. It's not hard to understand what the basis for community distrust and fear is, we have a lot of examples. Learn and acknowledge this when working with community members. For you, the researcher or scientist, that's watching this, I hope you learned a lot today but the most important thing that I hope you learned was how valuable community members and their lived experience is to your project or research. So go out and do great work with the community that you're around. And if nothing else remember that Deron sent you.

For more information about iTHRIV and team science, please visit our website.

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