

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are asking for your permission for your child to join a research project. The goal of this project is to use a game to teach students about career education. The game is played in virtual reality (VR) (on a headset or a computer) and it is called Play Higher. We are doing this project because it is important for students to start exploring careers early so that they can discover what they enjoy and what they might want to do in the future. Your child already learns about career education at their school as part of their regular curriculum. This game is a way to make their learning more enjoyable.

When your child participates, they will play the game during a time chosen by their teacher as a regular part of their school day which includes career education curriculum. In the game, the student will explore what a simulated day in the life of a behavioral health social worker is like. This game does NOT connect to the internet and is NOT an online game. It is a single-player game, and your child will not interact with any other person while playing. In the game, a “pretend” virtual client character who is experiencing housing-related stress will be introduced to a virtual social worker character in the game, and the student will help the social worker character figure out what to say to make the client character feel safe and cared for, and to decide how the social worker character should help the client character find resources to help resolve their situation. The client story has been carefully written so that it is age appropriate for any student in middle or high school. Then, at the end of the game, students learn about college degrees that will help someone get a job in behavioral health. A video of the Play Higher virtual reality game can be found here for more information about gameplay specifics: <https://playhigher.wvu.edu/>.

Before playing the game, your child will complete a short survey to see what they know about social work careers and to collect basic demographic information (age, race, gender, grade, etc.). After playing, they will take the same survey again to see if their knowledge has grown, as well as questions about how it felt to play the game (motion sickness, for example), and whether they enjoyed playing the game. We hope the game helps students learn more about behavioral health careers like social work.

This research is led by Dr. Megan Gandy from the School of Social Work at West Virginia University.

Your child’s participation will include:

1. They will take a 3-5 minute paper survey before the game.
2. They will play *Play Higher* using a provided VR headset for about 20-25 minutes.
3. They will complete another 5-10 minute paper survey after playing.

The entire activity will take about 28-45 minutes. You can read all the survey questions at <https://playhigher.wvu.edu/paper-survey> or ask Megan to send you a copy by email or by mail (see contact information below).

Your child will have the chance to agree to take the survey before they begin. Their survey answers will not be used if you opt out of the project or your child does not assent to the project. We will ask for your child’s name only to match their pre-game survey to their post-game survey and to match their teacher’s report to your child’s survey. Your child will not be graded on how well they play the game. The teacher will only report on whether there were any technical problems and whether your child needed help to complete the survey. After we match your child’s pre-game and post-game surveys, we will remove your child’s name so their answers cannot be identified. Your school or program was chosen to be part of the *Play Higher Pioneers* program and has already agreed to participate.

There is a small chance your child could feel motion sickness from the VR headset. If this happens, your child will be allowed to stop using the headset. A computer version of the game is also available for students who prefer not to use VR. If your child wears glasses, they can safely wear their glasses while participating in the virtual reality Play Higher game if they choose.

If your child participates, their teacher, counselor, or program leader will collect their survey responses and mail them to the researcher.

Participation is completely voluntary. Your child can skip any survey question they don't want to answer or stop participating at any time without penalty. This project has been reviewed by the West Virginia University Institutional Review Board, which oversees research involving people.

If you or your child have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at 304-293-4482 or by email at [megan.gandy@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:megan.gandy@mail.wvu.edu). Additionally, you can contact the WVU Office of Human Research Protections at 304-293-7073.

We hope your child will participate in this research project. This is a great opportunity for them to learn about an exciting career field that might interest them. As part of this program, your child's school will also receive a free Meta Quest VR headset (if they do not already have one) to keep indefinitely for educational purposes.

The total cost of the Play Higher program is \$93,747.75. \$93,747.75 (100%) is funded through a U.S. Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration grant.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Megan Gandy, PhD  
Principal Investigator

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**Permission (choose one):**

☐ **Yes, I give my child permission:** no further action required on your part – you may keep this letter for your records.

No signature necessary.

**--OR--**

☐ **No, I DO NOT want my child to participate in this project:** Please sign below and return this slip to your child's teacher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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