July 20, 2021

TO: UNM Human Researchers
FROM: Office of the UNM IRB
RE: Updated guidance on the conduct of in-person human research

As the UNM administration allows faculty, staff and students to resume normal operations in the fall (https://bringbackthepack.unm.edu/), researchers whose studies involve in-person data collection should continue to follow several important guidelines to minimize risk of possible COVID-19 exposure for both participants and research personnel. The university’s plan will continue to follow the NMDOH safety standards and CDC guidelines.

UNM guidance will continue to encourage hygiene, screening, social distancing, and mask-wearing for unvaccinated individuals and individuals whose vaccination status is unknown. The possibility of COVID-19 infection remains present and a concern when interacting with unvaccinated individuals. Although the risk of infection has decreased with the ongoing administration of vaccinations, researchers should continue procedures to mitigate risk of transmission.

Effective August 2, 2021, researchers proposing to conduct or continuing to conduct in-person research should abide by the following guidelines. If more restrictive guidelines are released by the University at any time, those will take precedence. Researchers always have the option to impose more restrictive procedures as they deem appropriate.

1. Conduct study procedures remotely (when possible) to minimize exposure.
2. Limit the number of research personnel working with participants to the minimum necessary to safely collect data.
3. Require unvaccinated individuals or individuals whose vaccination status is unknown to wear a mask and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between individuals, when possible.
4. Confirm all UNM research personnel have completed the required ‘The Pack is Back’ training in Learning Central https://learningcentral.unm.edu.
5. Ensure the following are in place where applicable and as appropriate:
   a) Procedures for screening of research personnel and research participants for COVID-related symptoms before they travel to the data collection site or before data collection.
   b) Research personnel and participants have access to the appropriate personal protective equipment such as disinfectant, masks, etc. if needed.
   c) Procedures for personal hand hygiene and for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces following direct contact with participants.
   d) Provide participants with written information, typically in the consent form, about the possible risk of COVID-19 exposure as it pertains to their participation in the research study.
   e) Minimize and stagger participant study visits to reduce exposure of participants and personnel and to provide time to properly sanitize the area.
   f) Require self-reporting for UNM affiliated individuals who are diagnosed with or display signs or symptoms of COVID-19 illness, according to UNM policy: https://hr.unm.edu/docs/hr/eeoc-ada-covid-policy-statement.pdf.

For questions regarding this guidance, please email Linda Mayo, IRB Director, at petreel@unm.edu.