

April 28, 2021

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

As the UNM administration allows faculty, staff and student employees to resume on-campus operations during the summer months (<https://bringbackthepack.unm.edu/research-guidelines/index.html>), researchers whose studies involve in person data collection need to 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 public health orders for all sites and will evolve continuously in response to the public health conditions and the needs of UNM and NM.

UNM guidance will continue to encourage hygiene, screening, social distancing, and mask-wearing. The possibility of COVID-19 infection remains present and a concern when interacting with others. Also, rare cases of reinfection with COVID-19 have been reported. Although the risk of infection has decreased with the ongoing administration of vaccinations, researchers should continue procedures to mitigate this risk.

Effective May 16, 2021, researchers proposing to conduct or continuing to conduct in-person research should abide by the following guidelines. **If you have an IRB approved protocol involving in person research that was put on hold due to COVID-19**, please submit an amendment to the IRB to address the guidelines outlined below. If you would like to submit a new project involving in person research, please be sure your protocol addresses these guidelines as well.

1. Keep or change (where possible) study procedures (recruitment, consent, or data collection) to occur remotely to minimize exposure.
2. Limit the number of research personnel working with participants to the minimum necessary to safely collect the data.
3. Always wear a mask and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between individuals, when possible.
4. Ensure all research personnel have been trained on procedures adopted to prevent exposure to COVID-19 (see [OVPR memo dated 5/11/2020](#)).
5. Confirm the following are in place where applicable and as appropriate:
  - a) Procedures for screening of research personnel and research participants for potential risk before they travel to the data collection site or before data collection and documenting such screening (not part of the research record).
  - b) Research personnel and participants have access to the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (e.g., gloves, masks, hand sanitizer).
  - c) Procedures for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment regularly and between participants.
  - d) Procedures for personal hand hygiene following direct contact with participants or high touch surfaces.
  - e) Participants are provided 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.

- f) Minimize and stagger participant study visits to reduce exposure of participants and personnel and to provide time to properly sanitize the area.
- g) 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/eec-ada-covid-policy-statement.pdf>.
- h) Add wording in the consent form as to what those participants in the study who have not completed their participation should expect if increased public health restrictions are re-imposed.

For questions regarding this guidance, please email Linda Mayo, IRB Director, at [petreel@unm.edu](mailto:petreel@unm.edu).