Guidance for CofC Human Participant Research Investigators

*Enacting CDC guidelines for Social Distancing*

Given the rapidly evolving circumstances regarding COVID-19 and the College of Charleston’s continued commitment to the health and safety of faculty, staff, students, and the greater community, the Office of Research and Grants Administration, with authority from the Provost, has issued the following revised standards related to research involving human subjects. Please be aware that further restrictions may be implemented based on recommendations from State or Federal authorities.

**IRB Operations**

CofC’s IRB is fully functional online and will continue accepting new applications through our [eForm system](#). IRB review and approval of new applications and addendums can continue remotely without interruption. Studies that involve face-to-face interaction that cannot follow the below guidance may be approved with the condition that enrollment cannot begin until after the social distancing restrictions are lifted.

**Ongoing Human Participant Research**

Ongoing research that does not require face-to-face interaction can proceed uninterrupted.

Ongoing research that does require face-to-face interaction may only continue if CDC Guidance for Social Distancing can be followed. As such, **all human participant research that involves specimen collection is suspended at this time.** All interactions must follow the below guidance, based the recommendations of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the Centers for Disease Control, which emphasize the importance of practicing disease prevention measures and following recommendations for social distancing to protect the health and safety of all South Carolinians.

**Social Distancing Guidance:**

- **Maintain 6 feet of separation between yourself and others**
- **No more than 10 persons in a room**
- **Follow best practices for disease prevention**

**Disease Prevention includes:**

- **Washing your hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds using plenty of soap**
- **If soap and water are unavailable use hand sanitizers with a minimum of 60% alcohol, (the CDC recommends 70% alcohol minimum) and rub your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds**
- **Cover your cough, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth**
- **Stay home when you are sick and do not attend public gatherings, and**
- **Appropriately disposing tissues and other items that you have used when sneezing or coughing**
- **Wear a face mask if you are sick**
- **Clean and frequently disinfect all surfaces that have been contacted, which include tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.**

Investigators should consider whether at any point their research procedures should be revised to limit personal contacts, for example by reducing the frequency of in-person visits or replacing in-person interviews with telephone or Internet contacts. Whether and when this may be advisable will vary depending on your protocol and the subjects with whom you are working.

If possible, we encourage the submission of protocol modifications to convert in-person data collection to remote procedures, outlined in the Requesting a Modification to Perform Remote Data Collection section below.

**Submitting a Modification**

If your research can feasibly be transitioned from face-to-face interaction to remote interaction, an addendum to the IRB must be submitted prior to implementing any changes through the eForm system. The following information should be included in the protocol modification:

- New mode of contact: telephone, Zoom, Skype, etc.
- How contact information will be kept separate from research data
- If the audio/video will be recorded, and that it will be stored on OneDrive
- Recordings will be deleted after being transcribed
- All transcriptions and other research will be stored securely on OneDrive

**Continuations for Research that must be Postponed**

Under the College of Charleston's Flexibility Policy, only research that is federally-funded or deemed greater than minimal risk requires submission of a continuation request. Research that is minimal risk, but postponed due to COVID-19, may continue past the original protocol dates without submitting a continuation request through our addendum eForm system.

If you have any questions, please contact compliance@cofc.edu.