



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH ALABAMA

**IRB SOP 201**  
**Institutional Review Board: Membership and Duties**

### **Purpose**

The primary purpose of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to protect the rights of human participants in research and to facilitate ethical research. In order to accomplish this goal, IRB members must familiarize themselves with all IRB policies and procedures, as well as understand the federal regulations pertinent to the research under review.

### **Scope**

These policies and procedures address the responsibilities of IRB members relating to duties, attendance at scheduled IRB meetings review of research proposals, and confidentiality requirements of IRB processes and procedures at monthly IRB meetings. Additionally, federal requirements for IRB membership are addressed.

### **Definitions**

**Alternate member:** Alternate members may substitute for another member on a different IRB committee if his/her role (non-scientist or scientist) are comparable as determined by the IRB Office.

**Nonscientific member:** Nonscientific member(s) may include individuals whose main concerns are unambiguously in nonscientific areas. Nonscientific members are individuals whose education, training, work, experience or other interests are not solely in medical, biological, or other scientific areas.

**Scientific member:** Scientific member(s) may include physicians and Ph.D. level physical, biological or behavioral scientists, nurses, pharmacists, and other biomedical health professionals. Such members satisfy the requirement for at least one scientist.

**Unaffiliated member:** An unaffiliated member has no affiliation with the University or its Human Research Protection Program, either self or immediate family member. Unaffiliated member(s), who can be either scientific or nonscientific reviewers, should be knowledgeable about the local community and be willing to discuss issues and research from that perspective.

## **Policy**

Each IRB (Biomedical Research- IRB and Educational and Behavioral Research – IRB) shall be able to ascertain the acceptability of proposed research in terms of institutional commitments and regulations, applicable law, and standards of professional conduct and practice. Each IRB should also be able to promote respect for its advice and counsel in safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects.

Each IRB member's primary duty is the protection of the rights and welfare of the individual human beings who are serving as the subjects of that research. The IRB member must understand that he or she is not serving on the IRB to expedite the approval of research, but to be a gatekeeper between the Investigator and the research subjects. In order to fulfill their duties, IRB members are expected to be versed in regulations governing human subject protection, biomedical and behavioral research ethics, and the policies of University of South Alabama germane to human subject protection.

### **1.0 IRB Membership**

- At least five members of sufficiently diverse backgrounds, including consideration of racial and cultural backgrounds of members and sensitivity to issues such as community attitudes;
- Persons who are able to ascertain the acceptability of research applications in terms of institutional commitments, applicable law, and professional standards;
- Members of both sexes;
- At least one member whose primary area of expertise is with children;
- At least two members whose primary concerns are in behavioral disciplines;
- At least one member whose primary concerns are in non-scientific areas;
- Members representing more than one profession;
- A member who is not affiliated/unaffiliated or related to a person who is affiliated with the institution;
- Persons who are primarily concerned with the welfare of vulnerable subjects (minors, prisoners, terminally ill, etc.);
- When needed, individuals with competence in special areas to assist in the review of complex issues;
- Participants in the initial or continuing review of projects who do not have a conflicting interest;

- The standards described above represent minimum requirements which the USA IRB typically exceeds. In many instances, an IRB will have 15 or more members with varied expertise and specialization in order to meet the research review requirements. IRB membership is recorded on a roster that is submitted to the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and is filed in the IRB office.

### 1.1 Community Members

45 CFR 46.107 requires representation on the IRB that is sensitive to issues such as community feelings and thoughts. The Community Member serves as a consumer representative and as the ethical conscience of the IRB. The Community Member provides insight in evaluating the Informed Consent Document for clarity and understanding. The Community Member functions as an effective link to the IRB, Investigator and the community. The Community Member provides the perspective of the subject. The regulations at 38 CFR 16.107 require that the IRB have at least one (1) member not otherwise affiliated with the Institution.

### 1.2 Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members

Members designated as non-voting ex-officio members are selected and pointed because of their position or area of expertise. Their terms shall be indefinite unless otherwise decided.

### 1.3 Alternate Members

The appointment and function of alternate members is the same as that for primary IRB members, and the alternate's expertise and perspective are comparable to those of the primary member. The area of expertise of the alternates should match that of the regular member such that the federal policy requirements as described in 45 CFR 46.107 are met if a regular member cannot attend an IRB meeting. The role of the alternate member is to serve as a voting member of the IRB when the regular member is unavailable to attend a convened meeting. When an alternate member substitutes for a primary member, the alternate member will receive and review the same materials prior to the IRB meeting that the primary member received or would have received. The IRB roster identifies the primary member(s) for whom each alternate member may substitute. The alternate member will not be counted as a voting member unless the primary member is absent. The IRB minutes will document when an alternate member replaces a primary member. The length of term of the alternate will be the same as the term of the voting member.

## Procedures

### 1. Duty to the University of South Alabama

The IRB(s) is/are appointed as Institutional Committees. As such, the IRB members serve the University of South Alabama as a whole, rather than a particular department. Therefore, regular IRB members and ad hoc consultants must not allow their own interest or that of their department to supersede their duty to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects. These members and ad hoc consultants will understand and comply with current University of South Alabama Conflict of Interest policies.

### 2. Specific Duties

#### 2.1 Duties of the IRB

- Protecting rights and welfare of human subjects
- Unaffiliated members are expected to provide input regarding their knowledge about the local community and be willing to discuss issues and research from that perspective
- Nonscientific members are expected to provide input on areas germane to their knowledge, expertise and experience, professional, and otherwise.
- Scientific members are expected to contribute to the evaluation of a study on its scientific merits and standards of practice. These members should also be able to advise the IRB if additional expertise in a nonscientific area is required to assess the research proposal

#### 2.2 Criteria for IRB Approval

Duties of members include reviewing human subject application materials in advance of meetings and being prepared to discuss issues related to human subject's protections, serving as primary reviewer when requested by the chair, and having an understanding of the specific requirements of human subject's regulations. See *SOP 506: Criteria for IRB Approval of Research* for additional details. Duties include:

- Determining risks are minimized
- Determining that risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits to subjects
- Ensuring that investigators:
  - use of procedures are consistent with sound research design and that do not expose subjects to risks
  - when appropriate, use procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes, and

- ensuring that the investigator follows a procedure for properly documenting informed consent
- Determining that selection of subjects is equitable. In making this assessment, the following should be considered:
  - purpose of the research and setting in which the research is conducted
  - IRB members should be cognizant of special problems of research involving vulnerable populations
- Determining if informed consent is sufficient and includes all mandated elements, if not, request clarifications and changes in consent document
- Determining that the research plan includes adequate provisions for ensuring the safety of subjects
- Determining if adequate protections are afforded to protect the privacy of subjects and maintain confidentiality of data
- If applicable, documenting requirements for waiver of informed consent have been met
- Ensuring additional safeguards are in place to protect rights and welfare of subjects that are more likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as students, children, prisoners, educationally and economically disadvantaged, etc.

### **2.3 Chairperson Responsibilities**

In addition to the above duties:

- Chairs convene meetings
- Call special meetings when necessary
- Make decisions in emergency situations to protect subjects and remain in compliance with regulations
- Confirms primary/secondary reviewer assignments made by IRB staff as requested
- Conducts review of all protocols discussed at convened meetings
- Conducts expedited review of biomedical research studies
- Reviews policies and procedures on an ongoing basis
- Serves as an advisor/educator in the institution's research community

### **2.4 Vice-Chair(s) Responsibilities**

- Performs duties of the chair in his/her absence
- Assists chairperson, IRB staff as need

## **3. Committee Member Appointment**

Committee members are identified by the Office of Research Compliance and Assurance, and recommendations made by the College of Medicine Dean's Office. Committee members are appointed by the Vice President for Research and Economic

Development. Prospective members may also be identified by the IRB chair and staff who review the nature and demands of the IRB. IRB members are appointed for three year terms which are renewable. If a member resigns prior to the end of their term, a person may be appointed to complete the original term. Members have liability insurance coverage as part of their IRB membership in their capacity as agents of the University of South Alabama.

### **3.1 Attendance Requirements & Meeting Schedule**

IRB meeting dates are scheduled a year in advance and provided to members during IRB orientation, as well as posted on the human subject's website. Additional meetings may be scheduled on an ad hoc basis. Members are expected to regularly attend meetings. When a situation arises which results in an unanticipated absence, the member is expected to inform the IRB office so that assignments will not be designated for review.

### **3.2 Non-voting Members**

Non-voting members from among the academic or administrative staff of the University are appointed to aid the IRB in conducting its duties. These members may take part in all meetings of the IRB, participate in discussions and make recommendations, but they may not vote on the decisions. Non-voting members are not included in determining or establishing a quorum at the meetings. IRB meeting minutes reflect the presence of non-voting members.

### **3.3 Termination of Appointment:**

Appointment to the IRB may be terminated before the expiration of the three-year term. The Institutional Official may remove an IRB member if he/she, in consultation with the IRB chair or other parties, determines that the member fails to perform his or her duties as a member.

The Institutional Official or designee may remove IRB members, IRB chairs, and if used, other officers (i.e., vice-chairs) with consultations from the Executive Director, Research Compliance and Assurance and IRB chair(s).

### **3.4 Confidentiality Agreement:**

Upon appointment to the IRB or attendance at an IRB meeting, members (voting or otherwise), consultants, guests, etc., will sign a confidentiality agreement.

## **University Related Documents**

[IRB SOP 506: Criteria for IRB Approval of Research](#)

### **History:**

Effective Date:

Revisions: November, 2018

### **Responsible Office:**

Office of Research Compliance and Assurance