

North Park University
Institutional Review Board

**Restriction of Human Subject Research Activities during COVID19 Pandemic
Precaution Period**

Given the continually evolving circumstances regarding COVID-19 and North Park University's focus on the health and safety of faculty, staff, students, and the community, the Provost and the IRB Committee are issuing the following standards related to research involving human participants.

Given current pandemic precautions and until further notice, **research interactions with human research participants must be performed remotely** (e.g., online, phone, mail, virtual meetings, etc.). Remote methods of data collection may be conducted if part of the original approved protocol or an approved modification. Research procedures involving face-to-face interaction with research participants must be postponed, unless the research procedure(s) are essential to ensure participant health, safety, or well-being (see the *Exception for Essential Research Visits* described below).

Exception for Essential Research Visits: Research visit(s) that are *essential* to ensure participant health, safety, or well-being may continue using face-to-face interactions if no remote option is available. The decision about whether a research visit is essential to the health, safety, or well-being of a participant is determined by the principal investigator (including supervising investigator when applicable), the participant, organizational oversight of any host organization, and/or the participant's care provider. Decisions must be informed by current public health guidance regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. Decisions about visits should be especially conservative for participants identified as heightened risk by CDC guidance. Researchers must work with their Deans, faculty advisors, and the NPU IRB to make appropriate decisions on whether a research visit(s) is essential.

Face-to-face essential research visits must adhere to current guidelines to reduce COVID-19 exposure for study participants and research staff. These steps include, but are not limited to:

1. Remotely screen all participants just prior to an in-person visit for possible exposure to COVID-19 or symptoms of respiratory illness such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Consult current public health guidance to determine appropriate screening questions. Research participants with possible exposure of symptoms may not participate in face-to-face interactions until after the time recommended by current public health guidance. **This screening does not require prior NPU IRB approval.**
2. **Ensure every day that all research staff that interacts with participants** is symptom-free and have not been exposed to COVID-19.
3. **Ensure appropriate infection control measures** are taken at the site of the face-to-face visit. For example, ensure availability of hand sanitizer, hand washing facilities, disinfectant wipes, etc. Train staff on appropriate cleaning and infection control procedures necessary to mitigate COVID-19 spread. Use appropriate personal protective equipment when handling human specimens.
4. **Stay aware of and abide by all applicable recommendations, policies, and actions** of federal and state public health authorities, North Park University and non-NPU facilities where research is conducted.

(Continued on following page)

Effect of the restriction on pending IRB applications

IRB review of submitted applications will continue as usual. Studies that involve face-to-face interaction may be approved with the condition that face-to-face interactions cannot begin until after the restrictions are lifted.

Notifying participants of visit cancellations

If a study visit needs to be cancelled, participant should be informed of the reason and that they will be contacted again when the visit can be rescheduled. These messages to subjects do not require prior NPU IRB approval.

Notifying the NPU IRB

Visit cancellations related to COVID-19 do not need to be reported to the IRB. A modification may be required to change from face-to-face to remote data collection procedures. A Protocol Modification Form is available on the NPU IRB website.

Please contact the IRB at IRBChair@northpark.edu with any questions.

Approved NPU IRB 4/20/20

Adapted from Iowa State University

Used with permission