

Human Subjects Protection Review Committee

FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee (HSPRC) and an Institutional Review Board (IRB)?

The HSPRC and an IRB have the same purpose, which is to protect humans involved in research. The National Institutes of Health defines an IRB as having permanent staff dedicated solely to this committee to keep records, take notes, coordinate times, etc. Relatively smaller institutions that do not have staff member(s) dedicated to this committee, therefore, call their committee the HSPRC.

Who is on the HSPRC?

The HSPRC has members from across the university, both faculty and staff, as well as one professional not associated with the university. HSPRC typically has university members from fields in which scientists conduct research, including counseling, nursing, education, and public health.

What should the researcher put on the form if the proposed project has no risk?

There is always some risk. If consenting adults are answering anonymous questions, the risk might be small. Small is not none. Even in anonymous surveys of adults, the risk might be that someone gets upset. So, researchers should have a plan in place if someone gets upset.

What is the most common thing people forget when completing the HSPRC form?

Attaching the questions; signing their names.

What should the researcher put under benefits?

The HSPRC's job is to protect humans, so the committee wants to know the benefit to the person for participating in the research. A benefit might, for example, be greater insight, realization, knowledge, awareness, etc. The HSPRC recognizes that there may be benefits to science, or to a specific profession. Benefits to science or humanity or a profession are not the focus of this committee, however.

If the planned research is to be conducted at some place other than the university, who provides authorization?

Someone in authority at the agency must agree that the researcher can collect data there.

Do people have to sign consent forms if the survey is anonymous?

No, not if they are adults capable of understanding the research. The HSPRC presumes that if the researcher explains the research, capable adults can understand that they do not have to participate.

How should the researcher treat the data to protect confidentiality?

In some projects, people can answer written questions without signing their names, or can answer online questions through a secure portal. In both these cases, they can answer anonymously. For

interviews or other research where people sign their names, the researcher should keep data in a secure location and show the data only to the dissertation committee or research supervisor.

What should a researcher expect from HSPRC with regard to research design?

The HSPRC is concerned with research design only to the extent that design impacts human participants. Other research design issues are the purview of the research supervisor or the thesis or dissertation committee.

When does the HSPRC meet?

Meeting times are set as needed, but are typically on Wednesdays at noon if there are pending projects.

What should researchers submit and when?

Submit a completed copy of the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee form, available on the UHCNO website (UHCNO, ACADEMICS, SPONSORED PROGRAMS). Submit electronically to lrangle@uhcno.edu by Monday at 6:00 p.m. before a Wednesday meeting. Researchers must submit documents in .doc or .docx format, not .pages, not .jpeg, not other formats. A typed signature is sufficient.

How does the issue of coercion relate to the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee?

Coercion applies to all research, so is a concern of this committee. People have a right to refuse to participate. Thus, the HSPRC checks all projects to make sure that people understand the project and what their participation will actually entail, and will understand also that they do not have to participate. Further, they must understand that there is no penalty for non-participation, that they can ask questions at any time, and that they can stop even after they begin. Coercion particularly applies to vulnerable populations such as children, students, parolees, and adults of limited intellectual capacity. For example, teachers or parole officers should probably avoid asking their own students or parolees to participate in research, because the students or parolees may fail to truly grasp that they do not have to participate in the research.