

The University Office of Research Compliance and Assurance is positioned to continue to function across its areas. The preparation, review, and submission of applications to the IRB, IACUC and IBC can happen entirely electronically. The IRB, IACUC, and IBC will have the capability to convene by teleconference. Provided that Research Compliance staff are not severely impacted by COVID-19, these activities should occur on time and without interruption.

Institutional Biosafety Committee and Research Activities Update on COVID-19

The University of South Alabama adheres to provisions of the NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules and institutional policy as outlined in the USA Biosafety and Exposure Control Plan. This includes advance planning for conditions that could arise as a result of a pandemic and/or to conduct IBC official business.

Checklist for Researchers and Managing Research Groups, Labs/Staff

There are proactive measures researchers can take to help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on their research programs:

- Keep abreast of any changes in funding agency and other changes in deadlines. We are fully expecting Sponsored Projects Administration will be able to submit proposals and process awards even if personnel are working remotely. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will most likely remain in a queue, pending resumption of agency operations – as has been the case during federal budget-related shutdowns.
- Principal investigators should work with their campus, college, and immediate leadership to develop plans in the event a campus is closed. The plan should prioritize safety of all personnel engaged in research, and ensure laboratories and research areas are placed in a safe configuration that is maintainable for an extended period with available custodial/maintenance personnel.
 - Utilize the [Laboratory Hibernation/Temporary Shutdown Checklist](#)
- If you are carrying out a long-term experiment and if it is feasible to freeze, preserve, or otherwise capture samples or data at specific steps, you might consider doing this more often.
- If you are planning animal studies or have animal breeding colonies, consult with the Department of Comparative Medicine regarding actions that can be taken to maintain animals and reschedule studies, if needed.
- Ensure that those involved in research projects have access to information they need to carry out work remotely (e.g., access to literature, existing datasets and research-related files, etc.)
- Identify emergency personnel and ensure they know what to do in the event of suspended operations.
- Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff and faculty.
- Remind lab personnel of your communication plan or create one if not in place.
- **Discuss with your team a plan to rapidly switch to remote work:** Researchers and staff should check ahead of time that they have adequate resources and access to information to work remotely:

- Discuss with your team a list of projects that could be completed while working remotely, and formulate a plan for managers and staff to maintain communication and manage workflows during such a scenario.
 - Ensure remote access to files, data, servers, etc.
- Identify priorities in case of restricted access, prioritize experiments:
 - Consider prioritizing work that can only be carried out in your research lab, and save tasks such as data analysis or administrative work that can be completed remotely for a later time.
 - Consider the management of your samples, and whether or not samples can be frozen or otherwise saved on a more frequent basis to prepare for the scenario that you could not return to the lab the following day.
- Check travel restrictions before making travel plans.

IBC Operations:

- In the event of an emergency, the USA IBC will continue to conduct official business
- The Office of Research Compliance and Assurance will be available to answer questions, assist in protocol preparation and provide training and consultation as needed.
- If campus operations are interrupted, the Office of Research Compliance and Assurance will arrange for alternatives to face-to-face meetings such as teleconference, if required.