

NIH Policy Manual

3014-200 - IRB Scope and Authority

Issuing Office: OD/OIR/OHSRP Phone: [\(301\) 402-3713](tel:3014023713)

Approving Official(s): DDIR

Release Date: 12/09/2019 ?

Partial Revision Date: 3/08/2026 ?

Technical Revision Date: 12/08/2025 ?

Transmittal Notice

1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This policy describes the scope and authority of the NIH intramural Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Research Compliance Review Committee (RCRC) which is also a duly constituted IRB. This policy partially supersedes the *Introduction to the NIH Human Research Protection Program (HRPP)* and fully supersedes SOPs 1 Human Subjects Research and the NIH IRB System and 2 IRB Membership and Structure. **Partial Revision 02/06/2025:** Incidents of undue influence upon an IRB member may also be reported to the NIH IRB Executive Chair in addition to the IRBO Director or OHSRP Director. **Partial Revision 03/08/2026:** The role of the Institutional Official has been added to the list of NIH leadership who can disapprove research that has previously been approved by the IRB.
2. **Filing Instructions:**
 - **Insert:** NIH Manual Chapter 3014-200, dated 12/09/2019
 - **Implementation Date:** 09/21/2020
3. **PLEASE NOTE:** For information on:
 - The current policies can also be found at:
<https://irbo.nih.gov/confluence/display/ohsrp/Policy>.
 - Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
 - NIH Policy Manual, contact the Division of Compliance Management, OMA, on (301) 496-4606, or enter this URL: <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx>

A. Purpose

1. Define the role and responsibilities of the NIH Intramural Research Program's (IRP's) Institutional Review Board (IRB), established under the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), to ensure oversight of human subjects research conducted at NIH.

B. Scope

1. This policy applies to all human subjects research conducted under NIH Federalwide Assurance (FWA) or for which an NIH IRB provides review and oversight.

C. Policy

1. The NIH IRB and the IRBO have sole authority to review and approve human subjects research activities conducted by NIH IRP, unless such authority is deferred to another IRB in writing by the NIH Institutional Official or designee, or OHSRP.
2. The IRB Operations Office (IRBO) has the sole authority to:
 1. Determine whether an activity constitutes human subjects research (HSR),
 2. Determine whether human subjects research activities are exempt from IRB review,
 3. Perform limited IRB review, and
 4. Determine whether NIH, through its staff, is engaged in HSR.
3. NIH investigators may not commence research activities until all required approvals have been obtained (e.g., institutional approvals, as applicable, and approvals from IRB, and ancillary committees).

D. Definitions

OHSRP has developed a comprehensive glossary of definitions that describe the terms listed below. The glossary can be found at the following link: [NIH IRP HRPP Policy Glossary](#)

Note: There *may be more than one definition per term*, so please review terms carefully to make sure they match the terms listed below. Qualified terms are indicated with a parenthetical qualification. When reviewing a definition, be sure that you are reviewing the appropriate definition that links to this policy. To further assist the reader, each term in the glossary cites the relevant policy number(s) indicating where the term is utilized.

Definitions demarcated with ([Pre-2018 Common Rule](#) definition) apply to research approved by an IRB (or deemed to be exempt, or for which no IRB review was required under the regulations) prior to the effective date of the [2018 Common Rule](#) (January 21, 2019).

Definitions demarcated with ([2018 Common Rule](#) definition) apply to all research approved by an IRB (or deemed to be exempt, or for which no IRB review was required under the regulations) on or after January 21, 2019, and to research transitioned to the 2018 requirements in accordance with HRPP policy.

1. [Coercion](#)
2. [Human Subjects Research](#)
3. [Human Subject \(HHS Regulations\) \(2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
4. [Human Subject \(HHS Regulations\) \(Pre-2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)

5. [\(Human\) Subject \(FDA Regulations\)](#)
6. [Identifiable Biospecimen \(2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
7. [Identifiable Private Information \(2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
8. [Intervention \(2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
9. [Intervention \(pre-2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
10. [Interaction \(2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
11. [Private Information \(pre-2018 Common Rule definition\)](#)
12. [Research \(HHS Regulations\)](#)
13. [Research \(FDA Regulations\)\(Clinical investigation\)](#)
14. [Test Article](#)
15. [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#)
16. [Undue influence](#)

E. Responsibilities and Requirements

1. Responsibilities of the NIH Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- a. When the NIH IRB is the reviewing IRB, it is responsible for the review and approval of all human subjects research to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects, including:
 - I. Research conducted by NIH investigators in connection with their institutional responsibilities.
 - II. Research for which NIH has accepted responsibility for review under the terms of a Reliance Agreement (see *Policy 3014-105 IRB Reliance and Collaborative Research*).
- b. When the NIH IRB is the reviewing IRB, it is responsible for oversight of the human subjects research, as outlined in *Policy 3015-105 IRB Reliance and Collaborative Research*.
- c. Only the NIH IRB or the IRBO has the authority to determine whether a project meets the criteria for human subjects research based on whether the activity represents “research” and involves “humans” as subjects, and whether a project causes NIH to become engaged in human subjects research.
 - I. If the IRB or the IRBO determines that a project does not engage NIH in human subjects research, it will notify the investigator.
- d. As authorized by NIH policy and the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects (HHS 45 CFR 46 and FDA 21 CFR 56), the NIH IRB has the authority and responsibility to:
 - I. Review, approve, require modifications to secure approval, or disapprove any research activities required to have NIH IRB oversight/review. Further, to take these actions based upon whether human subjects are adequately protected, including, based on the 2018 Common Rule, those exempt research activities for which limited IRB review is a condition of

- f. The IRB will interface as necessary with other offices and ICs within NIH IRP that are involved in research (see *Policy 3014-100 NIH Intramural Research Program Human Research Protection Program* and *Policy 3014-101 Organizational Structure of the OHSRP*).
- g. For additional requirements related to the NIH IRB, please see the policies listed in section F.2. below.

F. References

1. Federal Regulations:

HHS: [45 CFR 46](#)

FDA: 21 CFR parts [56](#) and [812](#)

2. NIH Policy:

[Policy 3014-100 NIH Intramural Research Program Human Research Protection Program](#)

[Policy 3014-101 Organizational Structure of the OHSRP](#)

[Policy 3014-105 IRB Reliance and Collaborative Research](#)

3. Guidance:

[OHRP Guidance: Engagement of Institutions in Human Subjects Research](#)