



**Washington State  
Institutional Review Board**

Protecting the Rights of  
Research Participants and  
Promoting the Ethical  
Conduct of Research

DSHS Human Research Review Section  
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website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda/hrrs/>

**What research is in WSIRB jurisdiction?**

Whenever the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, or the Department of Labor and Industries become engaged in research, the Washington State Institutional Review Board (WSIRB) has jurisdiction.

Research is reviewed by the WSIRB to assure that the rights and welfare of research subjects are protected when the research involves:

- Agency clients identified for research by the agency
- identifiable records held by the agency or its contractors
- agency employees as subjects
- agency funding, including pass-through funds
- agency facilities, such as the state mental hospitals
- agency employee as investigator(s)

The WSIRB also reviews research by four local health districts and other agencies that have received federal funds to conduct research but do not have an IRB.

**How can I find out if my research requires review?**

Call the DSHS Human Research Review Section *before* you begin filling out the application. Review Section staff will provide guidance on issues likely to arise during WSIRB review, and inform you of any state agency policies or WSIRB requirements that may apply to your research.

Review Section staff will also inform you of the type of IRB review that may be required -- full committee review or expedited review -- so that you may plan accordingly.

If the activity is research that may not require WSIRB review, or if you are unsure if it meets the definition of research, you will be asked to submit an Exempt Determination Request.

**Do I need to submit to WSIRB when I already have approval at my institution?**

In general, WSIRB will review all research in its jurisdiction, even when the investigator's home institution has already extended study approval.

Researchers should call the DSHS Human Research Review Section to discuss any exceptions to this policy.

**What is the process?**

All research applications should be submitted as Word files to [wsirb@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:wsirb@dshs.wa.gov). The application should include all instruments and data collection forms, investigator CVs, recruitment and consent documents, relevant application appendices, etc.

Minimal risk research eligible for expedited review may be submitted *at any time*.

Proposals which require full committee review should be submitted electronically by the application due date listed on the calendar of Review Board meetings. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Proposals for full committee review will be pre-reviewed within a few days. Investigators will be notified by email of issues that should be addressed prior to submission to the full committee.

Application forms are available at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda/hrrs/>

### **How long does it take?**

Expedited reviews are generally conducted within 2 weeks of receipt, with a written decision to investigators shortly after.

The full WSIRB meets 10 times per year. Investigators are informed of the WSIRB decision by email the day after a meeting, and will receive a formal WSIRB letter within a week of the review.

The time from initial submission to study approval depends in large part on the *quality* and *completeness* of the research application, issues which arise during WSIRB review, and the time it takes for the investigator to respond to the WSIRB.

If you have questions about what to submit or how to fill out the application, call the DSHS Human Research Review Section for guidance.

### **What issues might come up during WSIRB review?**

The WSIRB reviews primarily social and behavioral research. Most DSHS clients are vulnerable, for whom special protections may be required, such as a protocol for reporting suspected abuse/neglect and a protocol for handling threats of harm.

Plans for subject recruitment and the informed consent process will be reviewed to ensure that procedures are appropriate and respectful of an individual's privacy.

### **Are investigators required to have special training?**

Yes. Investigators must show that they have current training in human subjects protection. The WSIRB requires updated human subjects training every 3 years, even if the investigator's home institution may not. HIPAA training does not meet this requirement. The WSIRB will not extend study approval until human subjects training has been completed.

### **What about records research?**

Research involving only use and disclosure of identifiable agency records is reviewed under expedited review authority. The WSIRB will consider the research plan, analyses, risks and benefits, confidentiality protections, and the specific details of the records request.

Researchers are advised to discuss the proposed research with appropriate staff of the agency holding the records prior to submission to the WSIRB. A list of contacts is available with Appendix G of the research application.

### **What should I do if I need to change my research after WSIRB approval?**

Researchers must submit a Study Amendment Request before implementing any changes. The Request may be submitted as a Word file to [wsirb@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:wsirb@dshs.wa.gov). Researchers are welcome to discuss proposed changes with Review Section staff prior to submitting for WSIRB review.

### **What is the procedure for student research?**

Master's and doctoral candidates submit the same application and must complete the same requirements as all other researchers. It is expected that graduate faculty will oversee the student research, and provide guidance on research design and methodology prior to submission to the WSIRB.

Some graduate students are required to conduct research as a class project, especially in the social work field. In such cases, we encourage students to design a project that would be exempt from WSIRB review. For guidance on exempt projects, students may call Review Section staff.

### **Who can assist with this process?**

Contact the DSHS Human Research Review Section at 360.902.8075 or send an email to [wsirb@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:wsirb@dshs.wa.gov)