

Macalester IRB Recommended Best Practices for Human Subjects Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic

All researchers are expected to apply the following best practices for the foreseeable future in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By August 31, 2020, all investigators must have protocols for ongoing research that comply with these best practices. If existing protocols comply with these best practices, no additional action is necessary. If existing protocols do not comply with these best practices, investigators must submit an amendment by August 27 for review. Beginning September 1, data collection must be suspended for any projects that do not have an approved amendment on file with the college's IRB.

The following best practices aim to minimize the risk of infectious disease transmission in human subjects research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1) Avoid research methods involving in-person contact whenever possible. Researchers are encouraged to develop designs and interact in environments that do not require in-person contact by using online resources.
- 2) Postpone any planned visits of research participants to campus until further notice.
- 3) Investigators who make a compelling case for close (i.e., within about 6 feet) in-person contact as an essential method for their inquiry must minimize as much as possible the risk of disease transmission by developing protocols that address the following concerns:

- a) Excluding individuals who are at elevated risk of severe complications from a COVID-19 infection (including people who are age 65 and older or have at least one of the underlying medical conditions [identified by the CDC](#)).

- b) Postponing in-person interaction among individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 infection, as [recognized by the CDC](#). Protocols should be in place to screen investigators and participants, where applicable, for COVID-19 symptoms ahead of planned in-person interaction.

- c) Preventing the spread of infection by implementing protocols to minimize the risk of transmission, which may include: interaction in settings that minimize risks, observing physical distancing strategies, using measures to ensure low- or no-contact, and/or employing high-hygiene practice (including use of disinfection protocols, face coverings, or a combination of face coverings and face shields).

A note about participant observation.

Participant observation is a research method used in ethnographic research and other qualitative studies in which the investigator documents behavior and/or conversation of a particular community while participating in that community. Participant observation may be orchestrated to avoid close in-person interaction. Despite such an intent, participant observation

may spontaneously transition into a situation involving close contact with others. Therefore, investigators who propose use of participant observation must develop protocols that minimize as much as possible the risk of disease transmission by addressing the aforementioned concerns associated with close in-person contact.