



VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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OFFICE OF SPONSORED
RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS
c/o Institutional Review Board for
the Protection of Human Subjects

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Greetings All Students, Faculty, and Staff,

Virginia State University (VSU) is actively responding to the rapidly changing updates regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus). The VSU Institutional Review Board (VSU IRB) considers the safety of our researchers and research participants of paramount importance. In considering the risk to benefit ratio for biomedical and social behavioral research including human subjects, the VSU IRB is asking all investigators to read and to immediately follow the guidance below until further notice:

- Discontinue all in person recruitment strategies.
- Discontinue all in person data collection procedures.
- Avoid bringing groups of people together for data collection activities (e.g., focus groups, whole group interventions, surveys) for both biomedical and social behavioral studies.
- Discontinue sending out materials for a potential participant to return to a VSU research team (e.g. survey hard copies, etc).
- Submit an amendment form to IRB@vsu.edu stating how your study will continue and or change based on these COVID-19 inspired mandates.

Virtual or “online” modalities of data collection are still viable forms of research methodology and are suggested alternatives. Additionally, the VSU IRB strongly recommend that investigators take steps to decrease the likelihood of infection for both the participants and members of their research team. This mandate applies to all members of research teams, research participants, faculty, students, contractors, and staff. Ultimately, the VSU IRB encourages investigators to take steps as necessary to eliminate apparent additional risks to participants with the potential for COVID-19 exposure.

We do not have a definite time frame for this mandate to be lifted. However, given the current climate surrounding COVID-19, the VSU IRB will update the university as soon as we receive any information influencing this decision. At the current time, the VSU IRB will continue to review and approve research protocols that have been or will be submitted. However, any research team that has not yet begun research activities should ensure that doing so will not jeopardize members of the research team or participants. Please be mindful that any research activity including in person data collection procedures (either with one participant or a group) will be in violation of the VSU IRB policies and regulations.

At VSU, we are proudly committed to:

- * Providing a transformative experience for our students
- * Strategically investing in our academic programs
- * Embracing our position as a top Land Grant University
- * Embracing our role as Virginia’s Opportunity University
- * Partnering together as a University to tell our story

Below are some considerations to keep in mind with respect to overall planning and data collection activities:

Amendments: Adapt and Continue

All investigators engaging in human subjects research should develop actionable plans for virtual/online data collection procedures. This includes modalities Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, Qualtrics, Blackboard Ultra, etc. ***If the investigator already has IRB approval, they will need to submit an amendment to the IRB and detail the changes in their research protocol.*** Investigators and study teams conducting research activities that involve administration of an intervention or any clinical procedures should detail why their research is necessary to continue and provide detail risk management conditions. These plans should include contingency plans for cross training of staff, and ensuring access to required care. For those submitting amendments or new applications, there should be a specific section on how they plan to address the potential for COVID-19 infections.

For all questions regarding potential or current applications, please feel free to contact the VSU IRB at IRB@vsu.edu.