



# North Carolina Department of Correction

Research and Planning

4221 MSC • Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-4221

Michael E. Easley  
Governor

Nicole E. Sullivan  
Manager

Theodis Beck  
Secretary

## Conducting Research within the North Carolina Department of Correction

These pages summarize the procedures and requirements for research conducted with prisoners, probationers, and staff of the North Carolina Department of Correction. There are separate guidelines to request **a letter of support** – please read those guidelines on the web page.

In most cases, we have paraphrased the federal regulations. Here is the web address of the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP): <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>

If you are not sure whether your project is research, please contact us first.

The attachments are documents, in Microsoft Word format, that you can download, complete, and, for many of them, return them via email (required for application).

### **A Guide to the IRB Process**

This guide is meant to provide a basic orientation to the conduct of research within the Department of Correction. While our policy and procedures regarding research generally follow those of university/college Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), there are some differences.

We do want to help you through the process. Please feel free to call and/or email us for help and to respond to your questions.

### **Permitted research**

Not all research is permitted with prisoners and probationers. There are both federal regulations and DOC policies that may prohibit certain projects. There must be a compelling reason to conduct research with prisoners. Your research, in our judgment, must be relevant to prisoners and prisons.

The Code of Federal Regulations stipulates the type of research that can involve prisoners as subjects. On the OHRP website mentioned above (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>), you can view the categories of permissible research (45 CFR 46.306(a) (2)).

Your research must meet seven additional criteria:

- (1) the research is in one of the categories of permissible research (see above).
- (2) there cannot be any undue incentives as a consequence of taking part.
- (3) the risks involved in the research are equivalent to risks that would be accepted by nonprisoner volunteers;
- (4) procedures for the selection of subjects within the prison are fair to all prisoners and that prison authorities or other prisoners cannot intervene in the selection.
- (5) information about the project is written at a level that prisoners can understand.

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- (6) that there is no gain, nor perception of gain, for a prisoner taking part, and that there is no penalty, nor perception of a penalty, for a prisoner saying “no.”
- (7) adequate provision is made for follow-up examination or care after the end of their participation, if needed.

## **Application Packet**

The following papers are needed to complete the packet.

- proposal [Application](#) (using this Word doc format)
- an [Informed Consent Statement](#) (revised based on this sample)
- copies of the **actual tests, surveys and/or interview questions** (The Committee cannot approve draft material)
- **approval letter** from your college/university’s IRB

The **application** must provide a brief but comprehensive description of the project, written so that a layperson can understand it. You need to explain what you expect DOC staff to do. Keep in mind that you, not DOC staff, are the researcher. You also need to thoroughly explain your method of preserving confidentiality, since this is a significant concern with most research involving prisoners.

The **Informed Consent** guidelines contain the minimum necessary elements. You will need to rewrite it so that it is appropriate to your project.

The committee needs to review and approve **copies of the actual tests, surveys or interview forms**. You may have to send these copies via postal mail.

We will need the **IRB approval letter** from your academic institution prior to our final approval. You need to be aware that the IRB from your academic institution will be the IRB of record. In this case, that IRB needs to have a prisoner representative as a member. If that committee has a requirement of needing our approval letter first, we will negotiate with that committee.

Approval by this committee is limited to the research. You will still need administrative approval from a Superintendent. We will help you with this process.

## **Dates and deadlines**

The Human Subjects Review Committee has scheduled meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. You need to have a completed packet submitted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of that month to allow for agenda preparation. Staff will return incomplete proposals to the investigator.

## **Submission Instructions**

Please submit the application and the informed consent statement (linked in the Application Packet section above) electronically.

The appropriate email address is: [skiefer@doc.state.nc.us](mailto:skiefer@doc.state.nc.us)

The committee’s postal address is:

Human Subjects Review Committee  
NCDOC Office of Research & Planning  
4221 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4221

## **Questions?**

Please contact:

Stephan A. Kiefer, PhD  
IRB Administrator  
Research & Planning  
NC Department of Correction  
4221 MSC, Raleigh NC 27699-4221  
skiefer@doc.state.nc.us  
919.716.3080  
919.716.3990 (fax)