

**Guidance and Procedures Number: 59**  
**Title: Suspension and Termination of Research**  
**Date of Last Revision: February 26, 2009**

## **I. General Overview**

A study may be suspended or terminated if there are serious concerns about the protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects. The policies described in this document are based on regulatory requirements, referenced at the end, and apply when an IRB suspends or terminates a human research study. This document also describes the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator and the procedures that the IRB will follow to suspend or terminate a study.

## **II. Definitions**

**Suspension of IRB approval:** temporary cessation of some or all research activities as defined by the IRB.

**Termination:** permanent cessation of all research activities as defined by the IRB and study sponsor.

## **III. Policies**

- A. The IRB and IRB Chair/Vice Chair have the authority to suspend the approval of research when it is alleged, suspected or determined that an unanticipated problem associated with unexpected serious harm to human research subjects has occurred, and/or the research is not being conducted in accordance with the IRB approval and possible harm could occur to the human subjects, and/or serious or continuing noncompliance has taken or is taking place.
  1. Determination by the IRB to suspend the approval of research will be made at a convened IRB meeting or by the IRB Chair/Vice Chair in an emergent situation when review by a convened IRB is not possible beforehand. If the IRB Chair/Vice Chair determines a suspension of research is warranted, the full board will be notified of and review the circumstances surrounding the suspension at a convened IRB meeting and request additional information or impose additional stipulations as warranted.
  2. The IRB will determine the extent of the suspension in reference to the following:
    - a. Continued subject enrollment
    - b. Continued study treatment and/or intervention
    - c. Use of data for analysis

3. The protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects is of primary concern and is the basis in the determination of whether to suspend previously approved research. The IRB will consider various options and alternatives to protect human research subjects. Such options/alternatives will include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Continued follow-up of subjects for safety reasons
  - b. Continued study treatment/intervention by the same or different investigator
  - c. Withdrawal of subjects from research and transition of subjects to clinical care
  - d. Notification of all current subjects and/or former subjects of the suspension of the research approval
  - e. Continued collection and reporting of any adverse events or outcomes to the IRB and study sponsor
  - f. Additional training and education of investigators and research staff
- B. Either the study sponsor or the Principal Investigator of the study may also decide to suspend a study because of the occurrence of unanticipated problems or evidence of noncompliance and/or serious and continuing noncompliance, or for any other reason. If this occurs, the Principal Investigator must notify the IRB in writing within two days after this suspension and describe what steps have or will be taken to protect the welfare of the subjects currently enrolled and/or what corrective action measures will be taken as described in the paragraph above. This report will be reviewed at a convened meeting of the IRB.
- C. After a suspension of research approval, the IRB has the authority to terminate the research if the unanticipated problem or problems are associated with unexpected serious harm to human research subjects of such a nature that the problem(s) cannot be corrected or the study sponsor and/or the Principal Investigator are unable or unwilling to correct the problem(s) in such a way that the IRB determines to be in the best interests of the subjects. The IRB may also terminate a research study if noncompliance with IRB approval is serious and/or continuing and a corrective action plan is not sufficient to alleviate or rectify the noncompliance.
  1. Determination by the IRB to terminate the research will be made only at a convened IRB meeting.
  2. The termination of research involves all research activities (enrollment, treatment and/or intervention, and data analysis).
  3. The protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects is of primary concern and is the basis in the determination whether to terminate the research. The IRB will consider various options and alternatives to protect human research subjects. Such options/alternatives will include but are not limited to the following:
    - a. Continued follow-up of subjects for safety reasons.
    - b. Withdrawal of subjects from research and transition of subjects to clinical care.
    - c. Notification of all current subjects and/or former subjects of the termination of research.
    - d. Continued collection and reporting of any adverse events or outcomes to the IRB and study sponsor.

4. Based upon the severity of the events that resulted in the termination of research, the IRB may recommend that the Vice Chancellor of Research and/or Department Chair review and evaluate the PI's current privileges to conduct human subjects research.
- D. If a study is suspended or terminated, the IRB will notify the appropriate persons and agencies as described in [HRPP Guidance and Procedure # 60: IRB Reporting Procedures for Unanticipated Problems, Noncompliance, Suspension and Termination](#), as follows:
1. The Principal Investigator will be notified of the suspension or termination in the form of written correspondence from the IRB Chair. The persons and agencies described in Guidance #60 will be copied on the letter.
  2. The letter will describe the basis for the suspension or termination and any additional action that is required by the PI.

#### **IV. PI Responsibilities**

- A. The Principal Investigator is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the research subjects in his or her studies and is expected to report any unanticipated problems (events associated with unexpected serious harm to human research subjects related to the research study) and/or study violations or incidents as described [HRPP Guidance and Procedure # 57: Post-Approval Reporting Requirements for Investigators](#).
- B. If the Principal Investigator determines that an unanticipated problem, protocol violation, or incident(s) constitutes serious and/or continuing noncompliance and would best be handled by suspending research activities until a corrective action plan can be implemented, then the PI should suspend the study activities and notify the IRB within two days of the suspension and include a description of what measures are in place to protect the subjects who are currently enrolled in the study.
- C. The Principal Investigator must suspend study activities if the study sponsor determines that it is in the best interest of the subjects to do so. The PI must notify the IRB within two days of this suspension and describe what measures are in place to protect the subjects who are currently enrolled in the study.
- D. The Principal Investigator must promptly respond to any IRB concerns or requirements as outlined in the IRB correspondence.
- E. The Principal Investigator has the right to appeal the IRB's determination regarding the suspension or termination of research according to [HRPP Guidance and Procedure #13: IRB Review Process – Executive Committee](#).

## **V. IRB Procedures**

- A. Review by a convened IRB meeting (full Committee review).
1. Review materials are distributed to the primary reviewers and Committee members approximately one week prior to the meeting.
  2. Appropriate review materials may include but are not limited to the following: the issue prompting the suspension or termination, investigator correspondence, study protocol, IRB application, current approval notice, current informed consent document, study related correspondence and other pertinent documents (i.e., audit reports, sponsor safety reports). The entire IRB study file is available for review by IRB members upon request.
  3. For possible suspensions, the IRB will vote whether to suspend the research approval and determine the action(s) necessary to protect human research subjects as described in III.A. The corrective action(s) and stipulations necessary for the IRB to consider reinstatement of the research approval will be addressed in the written correspondence to the principal investigator.
  4. For possible terminations, the IRB will vote whether to terminate the research and determine the action(s) necessary to protect human research subjects as described in III.C above.
  5. The IRB database will be updated to indicate the date upon which a suspension or termination status of the IRB approval was determined.
  6. The HRPP staff will generate a notice of the suspension or termination of the research approval.
- B. The outcome and determinations made during the convened IRB meeting shall be documented in correspondence to the principal investigator and the IRB meeting minutes as follows:
1. A statement of the reasons for the IRB's actions.
  2. For a suspension only, the Principal Investigator will be informed of the level of suspension as it affects subject enrollment, continued treatment and interventions, and data analysis; and the corrective actions necessary for the IRB to consider withdrawal of the suspension/termination.
  3. For a suspension or termination, additional actions determined necessary by the IRB to protect the rights, welfare and safety of subjects to ensure that harm is not incurred from the suspension or termination of approved research as described in III.A. and III.C above.
  4. A statement informing the Principal Investigator that federal regulations, University and HRPP policy allow investigators the opportunity to appeal (in writing) the IRB's determination regarding the suspension or termination of approved research and that s/he may provide any additional information that may be relevant to the IRB's determination.

- C. A copy of the IRB correspondence to the Principal Investigator with the IRB's final determination will be maintained in the study file. Copies will also be forwarded to the appropriate institutional officials and departments and external persons and agencies as described below.

## **VI. IRB Reporting Requirements**

Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others; any serious or continuing noncompliance; and any suspension or termination of IRB approval and the outcome of the IRB's actions will be reported to the appropriate institutional officials and the appropriate federal department or agency head(s) according to [HRPP Guidance and Procedure #60: Reporting Procedures for Unanticipated Problems, Noncompliance, Suspension or Termination](#).

## **VII. Federal Regulations:**

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requires that institutions have "written procedures for ensuring prompt reporting to the IRB, appropriate institutional officials and the department or agency head of (i) any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others or any serious or continuing noncompliance with this guidance or the requirements or determinations of the IRB; and (ii) any suspension or termination of IRB approval" (45 CFR 46.103(b)(5)).
- The DHHS states that "an IRB will have authority to suspend or terminate approval of research that is not being conducted in accordance with the IRB's requirements or that has been associated with unexpected serious harm to subjects. Any suspension or termination of approval will include a statement of the reasons for the IRB's action and will be reported promptly to the investigator, appropriate institutional officials, and the department or agency head (45 CFR 46.113).
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that institutions follow "written procedures for ensuring prompt reporting to the IRB, appropriate institutional officials, and the FDA of: (1) any unanticipated problems involving risks to human subjects or others; (2) any instance of serious or continuing noncompliance with these regulations or the requirements or determinations of the IRB; or (2) any suspension or termination of IRB approval" (21 CFR 56.108(b)).
- The FDA states that "an IRB will have authority to suspend or terminate approval of research that is not being conducted in accordance with the IRB's requirements or that has been associated with unexpected serious harm to subjects. Any suspension or termination of approval will include a statement of the reasons for the IRB's action and will be reported promptly to the investigator, appropriate institutional officials, and the FDA (21 CFR 56.113).
- 45 CFR 46.116(b)(5)
- 21 CFR 50.24(b)

**References:**

OHRP, *Compliance Oversight Activities: Significant Findings and Concerns of Noncompliance*, October 12, 2005. <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/compliance/findings.pdf>

OHRP, *Guidance on Reporting Incidents to OHRP*, May 27, 2005. [http://hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/procedures\\_for\\_reporting\\_052505.pdf](http://hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/procedures_for_reporting_052505.pdf)

OHRP, *Guidance on Written IRB Procedures*, January 15, 2007. <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/irbqd107.pdf>

OHRP, *Guidance on Reviewing and Reporting Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others and Adverse Events*, January 15, 2007. <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvtGuid.pdf>

FDA, *IRB Information Sheet- Continuing Review After Study Approval*, September 1998. <http://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/irbs/review.html>

AAHRPP Tip Sheet: Suspensions and Terminations of Previously Approved Research, May 24, 2007.

[UCLA Administrative Policy 991: Protection of Human Subjects](#)