Is Your Activity Covered Under the Human Research Protection Program?

**Decision Tree #1**

It is often very difficult to determine if an activity requires review and approval by the institutional Review Board (IRB) without significant discussions with someone who has extensive knowledge about the regulations and institutional policies. To help faculty, students, and staff with this decision, a decision tree has been designed to identify whether or not activities and/or projects fall under the purview of the Prairie State College Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). If you have any questions or need clarification on an issue, contact the PSC Institutional Review Board.

1. **START HERE**
   - Will the activity involve collecting information about living individuals through intervention, interaction, or observation?
     - **Yes**
       - Will the activity involve collecting identifiable private information about individuals?
         - **Yes**
           - Will you be using data or other materials including biological samples, cell lines, genetic material, etc.) that are linked to private information and were collected by another individual or organization?
             - **No**
               - Do you have a written agreement with the individual/organization collecting the private information stating that they will not provide private information to you and/or for the activity?
                 - **Yes**
                   - Activity is not covered by the HRPP. No application necessary.
                 - **No**
                   - The activity is research with human participants. Please submit an Initial Approval Request form to IRB.
               - **Yes**
                 - Is the collection of information systematic? (Does the activity involve an identifiable method?)
                   - **Yes**
                     - Is the activity intended to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge? (For instance, will the activity be used in a publication, presentation, or achievement of a degree?)
                       - **Yes**
                         - The activity is research with human participants. Please submit an Initial Approval Request form to IRB.
                       - **No**
                         - Don’t know or uncertain
                       - **No**
                         - Please contact the PSC IRB for assistance in determining if the activity will need IRB review.
                 - **No**
                   - Will you have access to the private information?
                     - **Yes**
                       - Activity is not covered by the HRPP. No application necessary.
                     - **No**
                       - Please contact the PSC IRB for assistance in determining if the activity will need IRB review.
         - **No**
           - Will you have access to the private information?
             - **Yes**
               - Activity is not covered by the HRPP. No application necessary.
             - **No**
               - Please contact the PSC IRB for assistance in determining if the activity will need IRB review.
   - **No**
     - Will the activity involve collecting identifiable private information about individuals?
       - **Yes**
         - Will you have access to the private information?
           - **Yes**
             - Activity is not covered by the HRPP. No application necessary.
           - **No**
             - Please contact the PSC IRB for assistance in determining if the activity will need IRB review.
         - **No**
           - Will you have access to the private information?
             - **Yes**
               - Activity is not covered by the HRPP. No application necessary.
             - **No**
               - Please contact the PSC IRB for assistance in determining if the activity will need IRB review.

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1. For the purposes of this decision tree, “systematic” refers to a method or process that is designed and intended to produce consistent and reliable results. The activity may or may not involve an identifiable method.
2. “Private information” refers to information that is collected in the context of the research and is related to the identity of the individual participant.
3. “Written agreement” refers to a formal written document that outlines the terms of data sharing and confidentiality.
4. “Generalizable knowledge” refers to information that can be applied to a broader population beyond the study sample.
5. “Initial Approval Request form” is a form that must be submitted to the IRB for initial approval of the research project.

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**Prairie State College**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
**Is Your Activity Covered Under the Human Research Protection Program?**

*Decision Tree #1 - Continued*

1. Identifiable private information is defined as:
   - name
   - address
   - elements of dates related to an individual (e.g., birth date)
   - numbers:
     - telephone
     - fax
     - social security
     - medical record
     - health beneficiary/health insurance
     - certificate or license numbers
     - vehicle
     - account numbers (e.g., credit card)
     - device identification numbers
     - serial numbers
     - any unique identifying numbers characteristics, or codes (e.g., Global Positioning System (GPS) readings)
   - Web URLs
   - Internet Protocol (IP) addresses
   - biometric identifiers (e.g., voice, fingerprints)
   - full face photographs or comparable images

2. Will the data you are receiving be coded or de-identified? If coded, at a minimum you still have access to private information.

3. A sample agreement is available from IRB, if you wish to use one for your activity.

4. Common research methods include interviews, surveys, questionnaires, observation, shadowing, case studies, etc. Some methods are clearly systematic, such as surveys and scripted interviews; others are less formally structured but may still qualify as systematic, such as emergent-design interviews and case studies. Additionally, some disciplines overlap in methodologies or “borrow” methods from other disciplines. For instance, researchers in linguistics or English studies may use ethnographic methods (such as case studies and emergent-design interviews) to examine people’s spoken or written communication practices. While the college encourages the interdisciplinary use of research methods. Researchers must be aware that they are responsible for obtaining the necessary ethical review when using a new or unfamiliar methods.

Another way of considering the question to ask: Is there a written (or formulated or articulated) plan for the activity? Does that plan reflect the norms of an established discipline? If you are still unsure if your activity would be considered systematic, please contact the IRB for assistance.

5. The phrase generalizable knowledge also includes disseminating information through websites, newsletters, brochures, and other similar types of media. For instructors requiring human participant research exclusively as part of course activities, please submit a Research as Class Instruction form to IRB.