ELMHURST
COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 205

RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Elmhurst Community Unit School District 205

Research Review Board Guidelines and Application Instructions

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Introduction

The Research Review Board (RRB) acts on behalf of the district to review research proposed by internal and external researchers. The RRB is comprised of district-affiliated staff, including school and district administrators and others.

All research conducted within Elmhurst or with Elmhurst staff must be approved by the RRB. This requirement includes any research not being conducted by the district or its designees or primarily for non-district purposes (e.g. as part of graduate coursework). Later sections in this document provide more detail on what constitutes a research activity requiring RRB review.

The RRB meets on an as-needed basis evaluate proposals to conduct research. Research proposals will be reviewed when the applicant submits all required information and any additional documentation as requested by the Research Review Board. We strongly encourage submission of requests 60 days in advance of proposed research commencement. Decisions resulting from the research review process will be emailed to the requestor, as well as to appropriate staff. In general, the RRB will approve projects for a period of one year, though longer approvals may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Decision letters are typically sent within one week of the review meeting date. Researchers may not begin any research activities or obtain data for research purposes without first following the procedures outlined and securing the necessary approvals.

Criteria for Evaluating Research

In addition to complying with Board policy, federal and state laws and regulations, proposed research should also demonstrate educational value, a sound research methodology, and the research capacity and experience to successfully complete the project. Studies judged as poorly designed or justified may be rejected. In addition, there must be minimal interference with instruction and school operations and relationships between students, parents and school and district staff. The RRB may consult principals of schools selected for participation or other relevant staff as part of its decision-making process. A description of the RRB's review criteria can be found in Appendix A.

If you are conducting research on behalf of a U.S. government agency or are affiliated with a research institution such as university or other independent research organization, your research project should first be approved by any applicable institutional research boards at the relevant institution. Copies of institutional research board approvals should be included in any application to conduct research in the district.

Research Policies and Restrictions

It is important to note that no staff time or resources (e.g. email) should be used to solicit participation in the research study, or to collect data, unless specifically excepted by the district. Any compensation provided for participation in research must be described in the research

application. It is acceptable for proposals to include compensation for students who participate in research projects.

However, it is against Board policy for staff to receive compensation for their participation in research projects during school hours. Staff may participate in research activities outside contract hours, including professional development.

Researchers may not request data directly from schools or departments. All data requests must be submitted to central office for handling. Researchers may not receive personally-identifiable student level data unless the researcher also provides central office with written evidence that the parent or student, as appropriate, has consented to the release of student records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA).

Research conducted by a district employee must occur outside of normal work requirements including for the completion of a master's thesis or dissertation, and data collection cannot occur in any school in which the employee has authority. It is preferred that such research not include individuals known to the researcher such as teachers or students in their schools.

The RRB may place additional conditions on an external researcher as deemed necessary including but not limited to requirements related to insurance and criminal background checks. The RRB's approval of an external research project may be withdrawn for any reason at any time.

Questions regarding the process or RRB more generally may be submitted to the RRB Administrator.

Research Activities Involving Human Subjects

All **research** activities carried out by both internal and external researchers involving new data collection or use of existing data that involve **human subjects** in Elmhurst CUSD 205 (including faculty, staff, and students) must be reviewed by the district's RRB. Definitions and examples of what is meant by "research" and "human subjects" follow. Contact the district's RRB administrator with any questions or if you are unsure if your project requires review.

Definitions

(Note: These definitions are the district's interpretation of the definitions of "Research" and "Human Subject" set forth in federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.102.)

1. *Research* means a ***systematic investigation***, including research development, testing and evaluation, ***designed*** to develop or contribute to ***generalizable knowledge***.

S*ystematic investigation* means a study or examination involving a methodical procedure or plan.

Generalizable knowledge means conclusions, facts, or principles derived from particulars

(individual subjects, medical records, etc.) that are applicable to or affect a whole category (members of a class, kind, or group, a field of knowledge, etc.) and enhance scientific or academic understanding.

Design refers to the purpose of the investigation. Some investigations are exploratory or are intended to train students and are not designed to produce generalizable knowledge. It is important to note that although some projects involving qualitative data collection or projects that are exploratory in nature may not have specific aims and hypotheses at the outset of the research, these are still *systematic investigations designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge* if the purpose of the project is to archive results for future research, compare results to other assessments, or draw conclusions.

Typical activities that qualify as research and require review include the following:

- **Master's Theses/Doctoral Dissertations** involving human subjects.
- **Pilot Studies** involving human subjects.
- **Behavioral and Social Sciences Studies** such as investigations on individual and group behavior, mental processes, or social constructs. These usually generate data by means of surveys, interviews, observations, studies of existing records, and/or experimental designs involving exposure to some type of stimulus or environmental intervention.

The following activities typically do not qualify as research and therefore would not require full RRB review. **Note, however, that any project involving collection of data from human subjects must still comply with applicable rules related to privacy and confidentiality as well as ethical considerations related to informed consent**. Information about such projects should be provided to the RRB using the application instructions that follow and the project will be exempted from additional review. Key elements of informed consent can be found in Appendix B.

- **Class Projects, Research Practicum or Seminar Projects, and Undergraduate Thesis Projects** involving research methodology and course-assigned data collection. These activities generally do not constitute research because their purpose is to provide training in research as part of the overall educational mission of a program and are not designed to contribute to new knowledge. *However*, if, for example, a student is involved in an activity designed to teach research methodologies and the instructor or student wishes to conduct further investigation and analyses in order to contribute to scholarly knowledge, the design of the project has changed such that it meets the above definition of research and requires review. *Course instructors are responsible for assessing whether these activities meet the definition of research and are encouraged to contact the RRB for assistance if needed.*
- **Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Activities** that attempt to measure the effectiveness of programs or services, including program evaluations, model curriculums, or needs assessments. Such activities are not typically designed to be generalizable to the larger community and would not be considered research ***if*** results will not be compared with other assessments. *Those responsible for such projects must be certain that their activities are not human research.*

- **Professional Development**
- **Research on Institutions or Social Processes** when the intent or focus of the research is to gain knowledge of an institution or social process (e.g., a political party, labor negotiations) and this research is not intended to produce generalizable knowledge about any particular individual or groups of individuals. Often, investigators wish to collect information from individuals about institutions or social processes. Such an activity is ***not*** human subjects research when the focus of the research is not on characteristics of an individual or groups of individuals because the information collected from the informant is not about the informant. There is often a fine line between human subjects research and research that collects information from individuals in order to understand institutions or social processes. *Research on institutions or social processes, the purpose of which is to create generalizable knowledge about the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors of individuals or groups (e.g., voters, prisoners, employees, teachers) as being representative of these institutions or social processes, is human subjects research.*
- **Oral History or Ethnographic Projects** when the intent is to create a record of specific historical events and not to generalize to a broader population or group. Following are examples of qualitative interviews that are considered to be research and examples of qualitative interviews that are not considered to be research.
    1. An oral history video recording of interviews with Holocaust survivors is created for viewing in an exhibit on the Holocaust. The creation of the video is not intended to prove a hypothesis, inform policy, or draw conclusions. The sole purpose is to create a historical record of specific personal events and experiences related to the Holocaust and provide a venue for Holocaust survivors to tell their stories. Open-ended interviews that only document a specific historical event or the experiences of individuals without the intent to draw conclusions or generalize findings would not constitute research.
    2. Open-ended interviews are conducted with surviving Gulf War veterans to document their experiences in order to draw conclusions about those experiences, inform policy, and generalize findings. This example would constitute research.
    3. Open-ended interviews are conducted in order to create an archive for others to analyze and generalize findings in the future. Since the intent of the archive is to create a repository of information for others to use in research, the creation of such an archive would constitute research.

2. *Human Subject* means a living individual ***about whom*** an investigator conducting ***research*** obtains: (1) data through ***intervention*** or ***interaction*** with the individual or (2) identifiable ***private information***.

Intervention includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered and manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for research purposes.

Interaction includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject.

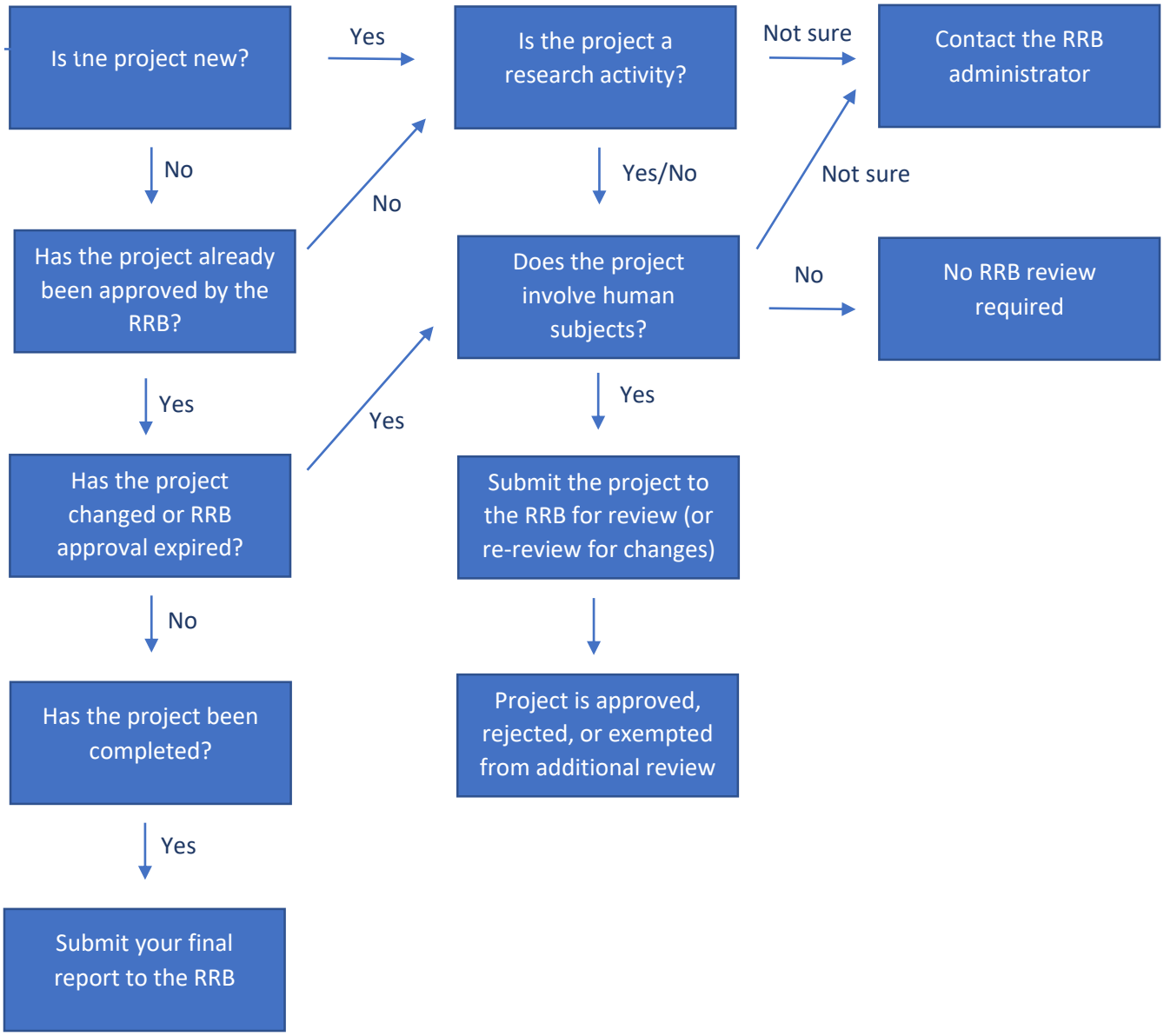
Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (e.g., a medical or school record). In

order to meet the above definition, private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is known or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information) in order for the investigation to constitute research involving human subjects. In general, private information is considered to be individually identifiable when it can be linked to specific individuals by the investigator(s) either directly or indirectly through coding systems, or when characteristics of the information obtained are such that by their nature a reasonably knowledgeable person could ascertain the identities of individuals.

Application Process and Instructions

Figure 1 provides an overview of the research application process, and more detailed information follows.

Figure 1. Research Review Board (RRB) Application Process



New Application Instructions

All application information and forms can be found at:

To submit an application to conduct research, take the following steps:

1. Download and fill out Form A, New Project Overview Information.
2. Download and fill out either Form B or Form C
    a. For ***research*** projects involving human subjects, download and fill out Form B, Research Proposal.
    b. For ***non-research*** projects involving human subjects, download and fill out Form C, Privacy and Confidentiality Description/Assurance. Some projects that involve data from human subjects do not meet the definition of research set out in this document. If you believe your project may fall into this category, download and fill out Form C, Privacy and Confidentiality Description/Assurance.
3. Collect all other needed documents listed on Form A, including:
    a. Institutional IRB approval letter (if applicable)
    b. Informed consent forms for teachers, parents of students under age 18, and students over 18 (if applicable)
    c. Assent forms for students ages 12-17 (if applicable)
    d. Surveys, interview forms, or other instruments to be used for primary data collection (if applicable)
4. Combine Forms A and B or Forms A and C and any other needed documents into one document (either .pdf, Word, or other similar format) and submit to RRB administrator.

Continuing or Modified Application Instructions

All application information and forms can be found at:

To submit a continuing or modified application to conduct research, take the following steps:

1. Download and fill out Form D, Continuing or Modified Project Overview Information.
2. Revise Form B, Research Proposal, to reflect changes being proposed.
3. Collect all other revised needed documents, including:
    1. Institutional IRB approval letter (if changed)
    2. Informed consent forms for teachers, parents of students under age 18, and students over 18 (if changed)
    3. Assent forms for students ages 12-17 (if changed)
    4. Surveys, interview forms, or other instruments to be used for primary data collection (if changed)
4. Combine Forms D and B and any other needed documents into one document (either .pdf, Word, or other similar format) and submit to RRB administrator.

Appendix A. RRB Review Criteria

- Projects that involve human subjects and that are research activities will be reviewed by the full RRB using the following criteria.

    - **Existing approval by an IRB.** If a researcher has obtained approval from another IRB (such as a university or other institutional IRB), many of the key issues related to protecting human subjects may have been addressed through that process, which may aid RRB members in weighing risks.

    - **Purpose and methods, including recruitment.** Is the purpose of the project clear? Are the research methods clear, including what data are to be collected and how they will be analyzed? Do the proposed methods align with the purpose and any specific research questions? Does the proposal clearly identify who the proposed participants are and how participants will be identified and recruited to participate, including any relevant recruitment materials? Is the project likely to achieve its goals, given the qualifications of research staff, numbers of participants proposed, analytic design of the study, and any other aspects of the study?

    - **Benefits and alignment to district priorities.** Does the proposed study benefit the district or individual participants (e.g. by providing them with information or feedback, compensation, or other benefits)? Does it benefit the field of education more broadly? Are the benefits clearly described? How well does the study align with district interests and priorities? Will the district have access to any data collected from the study and if so, can this data benefit the district?

    - **Risk and burden.** Does the proposal clearly describe the involvement of any district staff or students, including total amount of time needed for all proposed participants? How much time is being asked of participants and what are participants not doing as a result of participation? Does the study identify potential risks and how risks will be minimized or mitigated? How much risk does the project entail for participants? Are the risks no more than minimal? [*Minimal risk* means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.] Do the risks and burden focus on any group or sub-population and if so, does this align with the purpose of the study (e.g. does the focus impact the generalizability of the results or is it an intended part of the design)? Do the benefits as described seem to outweigh the risks and burden?

    - **Potential for conflict of interest.** Does the proposed research pose any potential conflicts of interest in terms of researcher relationships with research subjects, researcher financial benefit, or other potential conflicts? If there are potential conflicts, are these identified and management or mitigation plans described?

- **Informed consent.** Does the proposal describe how informed consent and/or assent will be sought and include all relevant forms or letters?

- **Privacy and confidentiality of the data.** Privacy refers to persons and their interest in controlling access to themselves. Confidentiality refers to agreements with the participant about how their data are to be handled. Does the proposal describe how any data collected will be securely stored and/or transferred and how participant confidentiality maintained? Does the proposal discuss what risks or harm would ensue if data were released?

Appendix B. Elements of Informed Consent

In seeking informed consent, at minimum, the following information should be provided:

- A statement that the **study involves research**, an explanation of the **purposes** of the research and the expected **duration** of the subject's participation, a **description of the procedures** to be followed, and identification of any **procedures which are experimental.**

- A description of any reasonably foreseeable **risks or discomforts** to the subject.

- A description of any **benefits** to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research.

- A disclosure of appropriate **alternative procedures or courses of treatment,** if any, that might be advantageous to the subject.

- A statement describing the extent, if any, to which **confidentiality** of records identifying the subject will be maintained and others may have access to research documents.

- For research involving *more than minimal risk*, an explanation as to whether any **compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs** and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained.

- An explanation of **whom to contact** for answers to pertinent questions about the research, the research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.

- A statement that **participation is voluntary**, that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.