

## Safe Research Planning for In-person Research (March 2023)

- Does your research need to be done in-person or could it be done using remote methods?
- Review available guidance documents and resources that will inform the development of your Safe Research Plan.
- Assess the risks of your protocol and consider ways to mitigate risks in the context of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Consult with stakeholders, sponsors and participant communities as you draft your plan.
- Draft your plan and attach to your ethics application or include details on this within your REB application for review by the REB
- Once approved, monitor, and amend as needed

### 1. Considerations / feasibility of using remote methods

- Is this research time sensitive?
- Not available or appropriate
- Other?

### 2. Safety Guidance and Practices

Check to see if any Yukon or community specific guidelines, restrictions or practices are in place and need to be considered. You should keep informed of recommended practices to ensure safety. Some additional guidelines are referenced here and may need to be considered in your Safe Research Plan.

Relevant guidelines from organizations such as

- 1) Yukon Government COVID-19 information <https://yukon.ca/en/covid-19-information>.  
Some considerations include:
  - [Practice the Safe 6](#)
  - [General guidance for businesses and organizations: COVID-19](#)
- 2) Government of Canada
  - COVID-19: Guidance Documents <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents.html>
  - Reducing COVID-19 risk in community settings: A tool for operators <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html>
  - Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298#chap1>
- 3) Yukon University COVID-19 response information <https://www.yukonu.ca/covid-19>
- 4) Navigate through COVID-19 [International SOS](#)

Consult with First Nations in Yukon communities that would be involved to determine the latest information on their community status.

Review other guidance that might help with developing mitigation strategies.

Ensure you are aware of relevant public health or governmental or institutional policies, guidance and regulations pertaining to the location where your research is being conducted.

### **3. Assess the risks of your research in the context of COVID-19**

Considering how, where and with whom your research will be conducted, what are the risks that COVID-19 may be transmitted either to participants or researchers? How can your research methods be modified to reduce risk? The following are guidance questions to help determine what kinds of risk might exist.

- a. Contact intensity – what is the contact intensity of activities with study participants (close/distant) and duration of contact (brief/short/prolonged)?
- b. Number of contacts – what number of contacts will occur in the activity setting (groups),
- c. Location and type of in-person interactions
  - How often will gatherings be required? How long will each interaction take place?
  - Will physical distancing (2 metres apart) be possible in the research? If it cannot be maintained what is the plan to ensure protective equipment in place?
  - Is the research taking place at more than one site? Would it be possible for researchers to carry the virus from one site to the next?
- d. Methodology: What methods does the research use (i.e. observation, interviews, focus groups, participatory community-based research, etc.). What risks are there with the methods to be used?
- e. Travel and Accommodation: Does the research involve travel by participants or researchers?
  - Who is required to travel, by what methods, for how long and how often?
  - Is travel to smaller or more remote communities required? If so, what health services are in place and would they have the capacity to handle those who might become seriously ill?
  - Does the research require overnight or longer stays for participants or researchers?
- f. Surfaces and Equipment
  - Does the research involve sharing equipment, tools, documents, etc.?
  - Will the research be done in a space that has surfaces that people may touch often (doorknobs, desks, etc.)?

#### 4. Safe Research Planning

Template provided to assist with considerations for a Safe Research Plan – details should be included in your research ethics application.

Information to include:

**Research Protocols** in place to reduce risks of potential transmission. (only include those that apply to your research)

- a. **At-Risk Populations** - risk profile of research participants and how risk is managed
- b. **Gatherings such as focus groups, collaborative meetings, presentations, research programs or events** - describe physical distancing arrangements and number of participants
  - Limits on number of people at site or gathering at one time
  - Limits on number and length of required in-person event
  - Arrangements in the space where gatherings are held to facilitate physical distancing requirements.
- c. **Community Based Research** – describe consultations with the affected communities. Consider the number and vulnerability of participants the researcher will be in contact with. What arrangements have been made in advance for appropriate spaces to hold meetings, and ensure cleaning protocols are in place?
- d. **Research Involving Indigenous Communities**

For work in you need to consider approvals from appropriate Yukon First Nations.

  - i) *Community guidelines and requirements* – need to confirm that community has capacity to accept research activity with COVID-19 considerations. Researchers should provide confirmation from community representative(s) that the community agrees to this research at this time. Before attempting to engage, verify whether the community has issued any guidance regarding their key contacts, capacity and operations during COVID-19.
  - ii) *Use of technology* – Determine whether the community has the capacity to engage and their preferred method of engagement. Even if engagement could be facilitated through video-conferencing or virtual events using YukonU resources, communities or individuals within a community may not have the means (such as adequate internet services) to connect. Determine any limitations in the community prior to engagement. Work with local community campuses or other organizations to determine whether shared access to computer technology is available for those who may not have access.
  - iii) Discuss with the community, how to maintain regular, respectful contact.
  - iv) Consider the current situation and if required, postpone activities until safe and meaningful engagement is possible.
  - v) Describe how you are planning to address these considerations / requirements in your research.

- e. Interviews** – Describe the safety precautions being used for in-person interviews.
- If interviews are held in public spaces, how will you maintain physical distancing while at the same time ensuring privacy of conversations?
  - Will masks be used by researcher and participants? If yes, consider how their use may alter the ability to understand one another, or muffle a recording. If using masks, will the researcher provide these to the participants?
  - If recruitment is taking place in person, how will this be managed?
  - How will interview schedules be maintained to ensure space between participants? (for example there might be fewer interviews per time period may be needed in order to allow time to disinfect surfaces between participants).
  - Is the researcher providing hand sanitizer for participants?
  - Are there washroom facilities available where interviews are held?
- f. Travel and Accommodation** – Describe how required travel will be managed.
- Are there any community-specific travel restrictions in place?
  - Considerations may include:
    - Do not travel if you feel unwell.
    - Limit the amount and duration of required travel whenever feasible.
    - Confirm specific community requirements before engaging with the community population. Researchers should ensure they have the resources to abide by community requirements.
    - Limit the number of people travelling together in vehicles or consider having passengers wear masks in vehicles.
    - Provide separate accommodation if over-night stays are required.
- g. Transmission and Personal Protective Equipment** – Describe how the risk of COVID-19 transmission will be mitigated in your research setting.
- What infection prevention and control protocols will be in place for the location where the research is being conducted? (washrooms, door handles, etc.).
  - Cleaning protocols and supplies in facility
  - Personal hygiene rules
  - Limiting shared equipment, materials, tools and hard copy documents
  - Disinfectant supplies and strategies (equipment, pens, computers, tablets, etc.)
- h. Research Team and Participant Safety**
- Working with vulnerable populations?
  - Team composition – number of people who will be interacting with one another
  - What steps would be taken if a study team member or participant became sick or developed symptoms?
  - What are the contingency plans for returning home or accessing care locally for research team members who experience worsening symptoms?
  - Do you have a self-management plan in case team members become symptomatic while traveling?

- Will other team members be available provide support to a symptomatic member?
  - Do you have self-assessment criteria for both participants and researchers prior to in-person contact? An online self assessment tool is available through Yukon Government at <https://service.yukon.ca/en/covid-19-self-assessment/>.
- i. Communications** – describe what communication plans are in place for sharing your Safe Research Plan. Clear details are required on what should be done if anyone involved develops symptoms or is in contact with someone with symptoms.
- j. Consent Documents: COVID-19 considerations**  
*The information below should be embedded, as relevant, in the various sections of consent document or may be provided as a stand-alone section.*
- Research site location. We are taking all safety precautions to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.
  - If you feel that you are from a vulnerable group with respect to COVID-19 effects (for example seniors, immune-compromised etc.), please discuss your participation with the research team before consenting. You are under no obligation to participate and nothing bad will happen if you change your mind about participating in the research.
  - The following safety protocols might be included if necessary:
    - Screening
    - Take appropriate precautions (e.g. masks)
    - Washing hands and use hand sanitizer made available to you
    - Physical distancing will be maintained, and face masks may be used.
    - You maintain your right to withdraw from the study at any time, including research data (if applicable). If you do withdraw, we will continue to maintain your contact information and will only give it to Yukon Health if required for contact tracing.

#### 4. Dissemination, Monitoring and Maintaining your Safe Research Plan

- Ensure your team understands any requirements of your safe research plan.
- Ensure REB is informed.
- Keep REB aware of changes or unanticipated problems that arise during the research.