

JERHRE NOTES

Concepts, Tools, and Resources for Solving Ethical Problems in Human Research

ETHICS OVERSIGHT IN COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH WHEN A RESEARCHER'S ORGANIZATION LACKS AN ETHICS COMMITTEE

A core component of community-based research (CBR) is active community involvement across the different phases of the research process—from identifying the research question to determining how to translate the findings into action steps. Research ethics committees (REC) will likely encounter human subjects applications where community and institutional partners are listed as study investigators. In some cases, one or more of the listed investigators may not be directly affiliated with a REC. For example, an investigator might be employed at a community-based organization that does not have its own REC. Should the institutional partners' REC provide ethics review for the entire project even though not all of the investigators are directly affiliated with that institution? Should the involved community-based organization be required to secure its own REC review?

Silverstein et al. surveyed REC directors to determine how they reviewed CBR projects involving unaffiliated organizations, and found considerable procedural variability. About half of the directors had a formal policy or written guidelines. Among these formal approaches variability also existed: some RECs required that the unaffiliated *organization* secure documentation granting review authority to their REC or to an outside REC, while other RECs required a written agreement with the unaffiliated *individual* investigator, and still others did not require more than documentation of voluntary collaboration. Policy guidance from regulatory agencies could result in a more consistent approach to the review of such CBR projects.

Silverstein, M., Banks, M., Fish, S. & Bauchner, H. (2008). Variability in Institutional Approaches to IRB Review of Community-Based Research and Collaboration with Unaffiliated Organizations. *JERHRE*, 3(2), xx-xx.

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