

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH APPROVAL

Description

This guidance pertains to when the IRB requests letter of support from an authorized individual at proposed research site(s) as part of the review process.

What is meant by “letter of support”?

A letter of support indicates to the IRB that individuals who may be impacted by, or who have an interest in, the research are generally supportive of the project.

When is a letter of support needed?

A letter of support is needed when the research activities are being conducted at a location that is not part of UIUC or another institution with its own investigators. This could also be an on-campus location that the investigator does not have authority over. A letter of support is most often needed if the research is being conducted at an elementary or secondary school. Other examples of when a letter of support may be needed include nursing homes or community centers.

In some cases, the letter of support may be needed in reference to a specific population where confirmation from those responsible for that population may be needed. For example, a letter of support from the director of a UIUC campus preschool may be needed to conduct the research at that location with that population.

If a letter of support is required for the project, final approval will not be given until the letter of support has been received and the IRB has determined it is sufficient. Please note there may be other situations when OPRS and the IRB require a letter of support to ensure the research is feasible and IRB review will not begin until that has been received.

What should a letter of support include?

1. Letter must be from an individual who has the authority to give permission for research to be conducted at the location or with the population (e.g., School principal, School superintendent, etc).
2. Letterhead with signature or, in some cases, an email from the individual’s official email address that can be confirmed by the IRB.
3. Name of the project, or a clear indication that this approval is specific to the project being proposed in the IRB application.
4. The letter does *not* necessarily need to include a “final approval” to conduct the research. For example, some schools have a formal process to review and approve research which may include review of the IRB-approved protocol. The individual or business may still require review of the final IRB approval; however, for the IRB review the letter can indicate the individual or business *supports* the research, and the conduct of the project is feasible pending additional reviews, etc.
5. The individual or business providing the letter of support is not obligated to ensure the success of the project. Specifically, a principal does not need to ensure parents will agree to participate in the study.
6. The individual providing the letter of support is aware of the study aims, the resources requested to support the project, and indicates an ability and willingness to provide those resources in support of the project.

Points to Address

New Study Application:

1. **Resources and Responsibilities Section, Question 11.3:** This response should describe any location(s) where research is being conducted.
2. **Attachment:** Letters of Support should be submitted with the new study application

Please contact the OPRS Office at (217) 333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu for additional guidance.