Montana State University continues to closely follow the COVID-19 outbreak. Please consider the following recommendations regarding your IRB-approved research projects in order to ensure participant safety:

Researchers should consider alternatives to in-person monitoring visits, if possible. For example, interviews could be conducted by phone or email. Or, perhaps the schedule of monitoring could be safely modified or delayed. The IRB does not need to be notified if you pause your study.

If choose to conduct research remotely, via phone, email, video conferencing or online survey/software, these changes must be approved in advance by the IRB as an amendment to your original protocol. Each situation will be reviewed and approved as rapidly as possible. The IRB staff are available at 406-994-4706.

If you choose to continue in-person research, research participants should be asked to complete a short screening for exposure to COVID-19 or symptoms of illness before they are scheduled for any study-related visits and in-person interactions (see below). This specific screening procedure does not require IRB approval.

Appropriate verbal screening questions might include the following, which could be modified to fit your participant population and the location of in-person interactions. Any YES answer should be considered sufficient reason to postpone an in-person visit.

1. Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past two weeks, even if they were mild?
   - Fever
   - Cough
   - Shortness of breath

2. Have you had close contact* with a person who is under investigation for possible COVID-19?

3. In the past three weeks, have you traveled internationally?

Decisions about in-person visits should be especially conservative for people at higher risk per public health recommendations:

- Over 60 years of age
- Underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- Weakened immune systems
- Pregnant

Handling Human Specimens: Researchers are reminded to follow proper safety procedures for handling human specimens that may contain COVID-19. Human specimens are handled at
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Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2). Researchers are reminded that appropriate PPE (lab coats, gloves, eye protection and face shields) should be worn in BSL-2 laboratories and procedures should be performed within a biological safety cabinet if there is a risk of infection. The CDC offers additional guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html.