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
IRB Guidance in Response to COVID-19

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](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html).