Off-Campus Research Site COVID-19 Information Sheet

Introduction

Iowa State University prioritizes the health and safety of research participants, research staff, and the community. This document describes measures Iowa State and the research team are taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure during off-campus research activities.

Risk of COVID-19 exposure cannot be eliminated. Please carefully consider whether you are comfortable permitting research at your site, particularly if someone at your site is at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 (e.g., is an older adult or has underlying health conditions).

Remember, PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You may choose not to permit research at your site. Research participants may decline or stop participating at any time.

If there is any reason you believe it is not safe for researchers to visit your site, please contact the research team to reschedule the visit. To avoid exposure and spread, the research should be rescheduled if: 1) any persons who may be involved in the research test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 during the past 14 days; 2) if there is an outbreak at the site where the research will occur; 3) if someone present at the site has COVID-19 symptoms; or, 4) any other similar issues arise.

Iowa State University Risk Mitigation Measures

Healthy Research Staff

Iowa State employees and research staff are expected to self-monitor for symptoms and stay home if they are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Research staff will be screened prior to the research visit, and may not visit your site if they:

- have current symptoms of COVID-19,
- tested positive within the past 10 days, or
- have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or
- previously had symptoms, until symptoms have improved and 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms, with no fever for 24 hours, or
- engaged in activities placing them at high risk of exposure (international travel, attending a large gathering, etc.) in the past 14 days.

Research equipment and materials will be cleaned and disinfected before visiting your site, and between use with each participant. The research team will have cleaning supplies on hand—you do not need to provide them. Research participants are asked to minimize unnecessary touching of equipment, and to carefully follow instructions given by researchers.
Researchers and participants must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before interacting. Hand washing/sanitizing may occur frequently during long visits or if there is contact between participants and research staff (e.g., applying sensors, blood draws, etc.). Researchers will bring hand sanitizer with them to research sites.

Physical Distancing
Keeping space between people reduces potential exposure. Prior to visiting your site, research staff will work with you to identify a location at your site that permits physical distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals. Researchers will also take the following steps to facilitate physical distancing, as appropriate for the study and research space:

- Stagger arrivals and departures of research participants.
- Minimize the research staff present to those necessary to safely and effectively carry out the study.
- Minimize frequency and duration of physical contact to only that necessary to carry out the research.

Part of our risk mitigation strategy is to avoid contact with persons who are not involved with the research—particularly those who are at increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19. We will work with you to establish plans that minimize contact with non-participating persons.

Face Coverings
Researchers and participants are REQUIRED to wear face coverings whenever two or more persons are present in the research space. Face coverings are strongly recommended at all times during the research visit.

Face coverings will be provided to research participants if they do not have their own.

Research Participant Health
Research participants will be asked about COVID-19 symptoms or exposure prior to the research visit. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS MUST NOT ATTEND A RESEARCH VISIT IF THEY FEEL ILL OR HAVE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS. A participant may reschedule a visit by contacting the research team.

For information about how COVID-19 spreads and what to expect if someone gets sick, please review information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), or consult with a health care provider. Links to the CDC and IDPH are available at the end of this document.

Research Site COVID-19 Policies
Researchers will follow the COVID-19 policies and procedures required by Iowa State and those at your site. When policies and procedures differ, researchers will follow the most protective practices.
Reporting COVID-19 Exposure

Iowa State employees and students must report to the Iowa State University Public Health Team if they test positive for COVID-19 within 10 days after a study visit. Reports are made using the Iowa State University Positive COVID-19 Reporting Form for Campus. Contact tracing is handled in accordance with Iowa State’s established procedures.

Reporting and contact tracing is handled by the appropriate local public health agency for research participants who test positive for COVID-19 but are NOT Iowa State employees or students.

To facilitate contact tracing, researchers will keep a visitor log documenting individuals who enter the research space at your site. Information will be used only to facilitate contact tracing, and the logs will be securely destroyed after 60 days if they are not used.

Note that contact tracing involves follow-up with those who are “close contacts” of an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. Close contact is defined as having been within 6 feet of a positive case for at least 15 consecutive minutes. Close contact between researchers and research participants is highly unlikely, as researchers are required to develop risk mitigation plans that minimize close contact (in addition to wearing face coverings, washing hands, etc.).

For current information about COVID-19 in the Iowa State University community, see Iowa State’s public dashboard, COVID-19 Public Health Update. This dashboard is updated weekly.

Alignment with Local, State, and Federal Guidance

Iowa State aligns COVID-19 plans and procedures with the local orders and ordinance of Ames and Story County and guidance from the State of Iowa and Board of Regents. Plans and procedures follow science-based guidance and incorporate recommendations from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, as does our knowledge and understanding of the virus and its effects. Iowa State will continue to update its plans, policies, and procedures as appropriate to the situation at hand. For the most current information, please see Iowa State University COVID-19 Response.

Resources

For information about COVID-19 and current federal and state guidance, see the following links:

- Iowa State University COVID-19 Response Information
- Iowa State University COVID-19 Public Health Data Update
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention