Fall semester was a busy time for the UWM IRB. Over 200 new studies were received between August and December. As always, we did our best to make sure the IRB review process ran smoothly and efficiently for our UWM research community. In September we welcomed Jessica Rice as our new IRB Administrator. Also in September, the Board welcomed several new full members—a warm welcome to Jay Kapel-lusch (Occupational Science and Technology), Thomas LeBel (Criminal Justice), Stephen Cobb (Kinesiology), Jim Addison (Community Representative) and Fessahaye Mebrahtu (Community Representative). Graduate student Timothy Geier (Psychology) also joined the Board as an alternate for Kimberly Kulovitz. The expertise that our members bring to the Board is invaluable and we are grateful for their service!

2013 IRB User Satisfaction Survey

Once again we would like to ask all users of the UWM IRB to complete a short survey for us. The feedback we received to our 2010 survey was invaluable in helping us make adjustments to ensure the IRB process moves smoothly for our investigators. This year’s survey focuses on our transition to IRBManager (our online submission system) as well as general IRB feedback. Click on the link below to begin the survey and thank you in advance!

Click here to complete the 2013 UWM IRB User survey

New Online Survey Consent Template Available Now

Over the past few years, the number of researchers at UWM collecting data through online surveys, including Qualtrics, has increased exponentially. Because of the unique risks associated with this method of data collection and the related issues around presenting accurate information in the study’s consent form, the IRB has made a few modifications to our Online consent template. This new template was released in January of 2013 and addresses topics such as data security, confidentiality and risks associated with these. This form can be used with research projects wanting to collect confidential or anonymous data and will contain instructions on which language should be included. We also have created a guidance document to help researchers determine if the data and their data collections methods are anonymous or confidential. If you have any feedback on this new template, contact us and let us know. And as always, if you have any questions or concerns, contact us.

Online Survey Consent Template available here: http://www4.uwm.edu/usa/irb/researchers/formsandtemplates.cfm

Upcoming IRB meeting Dates:

♦ March 1, 2013 (deadline for Full Board submissions is February 13th)
♦ April 5, 2013 (deadline for Full Board submission March 20)
♦ May 3, 2013 (deadline for Full Board submissions April 19)
Reminder: Anonymous vs. Confidential

There is often confusion over the correct usage of the terms ‘anonymous’ and ‘confidential’. From a human subjects protection view point, understanding and using the correct terminology in your submission is important because it helps the reviewers obtain an accurate understanding of the risks associated with your study and also helps to quickly determine if your study qualifies for an exempt or expedited review category.

Anonymous: For a study to collect anonymous data, the identity of the participant must not be known by the researcher at any time, for any reason. It would be impossible for the researcher to ever link a participant to his/her data. Please keep in mind that this refers not only to not collecting direct identifiers such as name, address, ID numbers, etc… but also includes collecting demographic information that would make the participant identifiable even in the absence of direct identifiers. Because of this, investigators must consider the sample size and diversity before determining if their participants and data can be considered to be anonymous or confidential.

In online surveys in particular, be aware that many survey platforms will automatically collect IP addresses of respondents unless programmed to do otherwise. IP address is considered an identifier and would make the data collection confidential instead of anonymous. If you would like to conduct an anonymous online survey, the IRB will ask you to confirm that you have taken steps to ensure that IP addresses will not be collected.

Confidential: In studies where participation and/or data will be confidential, identifying information is collected by the researchers, for any reason. The investigator is obligated to make it clear in the consent forms who will have access to identified data and when it will, if ever, be disclosed. Data are confidential if a link exists between the data and the participant. In most cases, it is highly recommended that identifying information be kept in a separate secure location and that a unique code be used for any active data sets. Please remember that coded data are not considered anonymous.

If the key (document linking coded data to identifiers) is destroyed, and the data set no longer contains any identifiers (refer to anonymous section above for what is considered an identifier) then the data are considered de-identified and may be considered anonymous for further research purposes.

For more detailed information on this often confusing distinction, check the IRB website for a Guidance document: Click here to read the document or contact the IRB staff with any questions.

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Tip: Principal Investigators (PI) &

Student Principal Investigators (SPI)

When putting together your submission, remember that students cannot serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) of a study, but they should be named as Student Principal Investigator (SPI). The SPI can be responsible for preparing the submission. Once the forms are complete and all documents attached, the SPI will sign-off on the form and it will be sent to the PI who should review the study x-form and all documents and provide the final sign-off in order to send the study to the IRB for review. Remember: The form needs to include sign-offs from both the SPI and the PI before the IRB will receive it.

If the PI has changes for the SPI to make before submitting the x-form, make sure to click the “reject” button to send it back to the SPI for edits. This way the SPI can work off of the original form, instead of recreating the submission from scratch.

Also keep in mind that both the Student PI and the PI must have a current CITI Completion certificate on file in order to act in these roles. If you are unsure if you’ve completed CITI training, we maintain a list on our website of people who have completed the training through UWM:

http://www4.uwm.edu/irb/researchers/training.cfm

If your CITI training was through a different institution, just send a copy of the completion certificate to irbinfo@uwm.edu and we will add you to the list.