

## **Privacy and confidentiality guidance for researchers working from home**

The Research Ethics Board (REB), BC Children’s Hospital (BCCH) Research Data Management Team, and your Research Privacy Office have drafted this guidance to help support you while you are working from home. Please consider the following:

- **We are still here to support you!** Although many service providers are now also working from home, we are only a simple email or phone call away. If you need help from the REB or Research Privacy Office, please send us an email and we can call you back from our home offices. Cell phone numbers are also listed in the email signatures of all REB staff. Our contact information is at the end of this guidance.
- The Research Ethics Boards have Standard Operating Procedures **to expediate the review of studies conducted under a public health emergency**. If you are doing research about COVID-19 please contact your REB and they will help guide you through this process.
- **Make your home equipment as secure as possible.** Please make sure your home computer is password protected and password protect any sensitive files. Also ensure that you have antivirus software on your home computer (e.g., Sophos has free antivirus software). Only use your work email. Do not share any sensitive research information on personal email accounts like gmail, etc.
- The BCCH Research Data Management Team is still operational and continuing to manage their REDCap service. Any questions or concerns about any data you have stored there can be directed to [redcap@bcchr.ca](mailto:redcap@bcchr.ca) or by contacting Elodie Portales-Casamar (see contact below).
- If you need to consent participants remotely please **consider using electronic consent using the BCCH REDCap**. You can amend your ethics application to employ e-consent and add this statement to your consent form *“Your electronic consent form will be stored in the BC Children’s Hospital Research Institute’s secured network in Vancouver, BC. Only authorized personnel will be able to access it.”* The BCCH Research Data Management Team has published E-Consent Tips and Tricks available here: <https://rc.bcchr.ca/redcap/surveys/?s=YLD8KN3FPY>. Contact the Data Management team at [redcap@bcchr.ca](mailto:redcap@bcchr.ca) for any request or question.
- **Consider communicating with participants remotely when possible.** If you plan to use web-based programs with servers outside of Canada (e.g., Skype, Facetime, etc) you will need to amend your ethics application with the REB. The UBC Clinical REB has created a guidance and sample template consent form addendum that can be found here: [https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/COVID19\\_ICF%20addedum\\_0.docx](https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/COVID19_ICF%20addedum_0.docx)
- If you need to **transfer sensitive or confidential data between team members** please use the BCCHR Secure File Transfer Service here: <https://hub.bcchr.ca/display/it/BCCHR+File+Transfer+User+Guide>

You may also want to try the IMITS Secure File Transfer Service. Everyone with a health authority email address has already been provisioned access to the IMITS Secure File Transfer Service (use your email address and password to log in). The IMITS InfoCentre contains more detailed information about the Secure File Transfer service. You must be on the network to access this site. Before sharing protected personal information with external recipients, you must get permission. Acceptable external recipients of shared files include:

- Ministry of Health
- BC health authorities and other Canadian health organizations
- Universities and other research organizations
- External contractors or vendors
- Private physician offices

All files containing private/confidential information must be sent with appropriate security measures using passwords or encryption based on the sensitivity of the information. Passwords should be provided in a different manner (e.g. by phone, text). Please also ensure that recipients secure the information appropriately. You can find more information here:

<http://imitsinfocentre.healthbc.org/services/secure-file-transfer>

You may also want to try the REDCap sendit data transfer application, which is also considered to be secure. For more information about it please contact the BCCH Data Management team at [redcap@bcchr.ca](mailto:redcap@bcchr.ca).

- Try to **limit the amount of copies** you have of research data. The more copies you have, the more you increase the chance of a privacy breach. Extra copies of data should be destroyed/deleted as early as possible. **Be especially careful with identifiable information.** Limit its transfer to only when it is absolutely necessary and limit the number of team members who can view it and use it. **Identifiable data should never leave the Health Authority environment** unless this has been approved in advance by the REB. **Keep track** of where all your data are including copies.
- The C&W REB distributed a Bulletin this morning that clarifies the review process during this event and can be found here: <http://www.phsa.ca/researcher/Documents/REB%20COVID19%20Bulletin%201%20Mar18-2020.pdf>
- The UBC Research Ethics Office recently posted a series of FAQs that address some of the key concerns relating to the continuity of research activities including questions about research funding and fieldwork. It can be found here: <https://research.ubc.ca/research-faqs-relating-covid-19>
- If you need to use email please make sure that files are password protected and the passwords to those files are sent in a different manner (e.g. by phone, text). **Always use your professional email** address and never use personal email accounts like gmail, etc for research related tasks. **Never transfer identifiable information via email** unless this has been pre-approved by the REB.

### Contact information for support:

Holly Longstaff, PhD  
Director, Privacy and Access, PHSA Research and New Initiatives  
Research & Academic Services  
Provincial Health Services Authority  
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