RUTGERS
Office of Research and Economic Development

**To:** Rutgers University Research Community

**From:** S. David Kimball, Senior Vice President for Research & Economic Development

**Date:** March 17, 2020

**Re:** Research Preparedness during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As a research university, we must be prepared to react appropriately to the COVID-19 pandemic even as we strive to maintain our research inside and outside of the laboratory. We are closely following the actions of our peer institutions and further guidance will be provided as circumstances warrant. In addition to the general guidance provided below, faculty and research teams should seek specific advice from their chairs, deans or associate deans for research, and campus research vice chancellors. This memo will be posted to the COVID-19 website along with FAQs and will be linked to other relevant websites.

**All COVID-19 research is considered essential and should continue.**
All clinical and nonclinical research on coronavirus and COVID-19 is exempt from university restrictions below.

**Research continuity plans** should be communicated to your chairs and directors by **Wednesday, March 18th**. In the event of a further contingency, plans for a possible temporary closure of laboratories should be in place **by Friday, March 20th**. While no closure of laboratories is planned at this time, we must all diligently prepare for such a contingency should the need arise in the future.

**Laboratory Research**
Building upon our previous guidance on the continuity of research, faculty should *immediately establish a research continuity plan* which anticipates possible curtailment of laboratory research. **By 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18th**:

- Define a robust communication network with your group.
- Discontinue face-to-face group meetings and reduce laboratory presence to the extent possible; strive to keep all essential lab activities within reasonable or reduced business hours.
- Identify 1-2 personnel per lab who are essential to maintain critical research and ensure that they know what to do if operations are interrupted temporarily or closed for a significant period of time. **A rotation system may be possible for the larger labs, with no more than one person per lab being present on any given day to maintain critical research or animal care.**
- Organize research activities in order to maintain essential functions and capabilities in the event of a possible emergency mode operation of research laboratories as above.
- Define any necessary processes for shutdown of equipment in your laboratory.

If your research is based within a school, forward these plans to the department chair by **Wednesday, March 18th at 6:00 p.m.**; if your research is based within a Center or Institute, forward these plans to the Center/Institute director by **Wednesday, March 18th at 6:00 p.m.**

The chairs should summarize their plans and submit them to their deans, and the deans and Center/Institute directors will then summarize their plans and submit them to the relevant vice chancellors for research of the individual chancellor units by **12:00 noon on Thursday, March 19th**.

**Clinical Research and Research with Human Subjects**

All non-essential research involving face-to-face interactions with subjects should be placed on hiatus. Subjects who are on therapeutic or active surveillance clinical trials will be considered as an exception.

- In-person research visits should continue for participants already enrolled in essential clinical trials if it is essential for patient safety and/or the participation in the clinical trial is an integral part of the patient's treatment plan. The study physician, in consultation with the study team, the patient's physician, the patient, and the patient's family should carefully assess the necessity and risks of an in-person visit.
- **Essential clinical trials are those that enroll or follow patients with life-threatening or serious conditions for which participation in the clinical trial holds out the clear prospect of the patient directly benefiting. Patients already enrolled into clinical trials who are undergoing safety assessments fall into this definition.** Research staff should make efforts to use alternative methods to conduct research visits or perform testing such as check-ins with participants by phone and/or performing research-related lab testing at lab testing centers, where feasible.
- No new clinical trial may be initiated at this time unless it meets the definition of an essential clinical trial. No new enrollment of research participants into existing clinical trials may occur unless it meets the definition of an essential clinical trial. All other in-person clinical research visits must be postponed.
- Research staff should work remotely, unless their presence is required for the safe conduct of the trial.

Specific guidance regarding clinical research may be sought here; any exceptions require the input and approval of the relevant dean or chancellor.

**Research Administration**

All research administration activities and contacts have been moved offsite. Federal guidance on submitting and managing awards is evolving rapidly. We will continue to post research-related information and updates on our Research Administration website.

**Animal Care**

Animal Care is being managed with the highest priority, and we are following contingency plans to maintain the highest level of support possible. FAQs for Animal Care COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness

**Please forward all questions to your school research office or to the COVID-19 task force.**