

FEINBERG RESEARCH GUIDANCE

Updated September 22, 2020

Version 2 - Changing guidance will be provided as circumstances dictate

Principles

- Ensure that medical school personnel begin returning to campus in a way that is compliant and congruent with [city](#) and [state](#) stay-at-home policies, as well as University [policies for environmental health and safety](#) and [phased return to campus](#).
- Recognize we are moving into an uncertain new-normal; risk can be mitigated with appropriate caution, but not completely eliminated; the virus is going to be in the community causing new cases of disease for some time; will need to adapt to change.
- The school's responsibility is to provide guidance and support for how to implement best practices for safely returning to work in an academic campus setting, as well as to ensure that return-to-work policies are equitable and flexible to the very wide span of employee roles and work settings on our campus.
- Promote self-agency characterized by common sense behaviors and consideration for others.
- Completion of the "Pandemic Essentials: Research on Campus" training module in myHR Learn [Pandemic Essentials](#) and development of laboratory activation plans are required. Principal investigators need to complete the laboratory activation plan and review with their laboratory personnel before submitting through [LUMEN](#). These plans will be reviewed and monitored by the school. A [template](#) is provided to assist with planning.
- For the research enterprise, PI's are responsible for tailoring guidelines and recommendations for their individual labs, based on location, type of space, number and type of personnel, requirements of their research, etc.
- Trust but verify: A monitored hotline (312-503-3437) is available to allow faculty, staff, and students to report concerns or issues that may need to be addressed by the school; it is hoped in the spirit of quality improvement that people using the hotline will leave contact information to provide confidential follow-up. In addition, buildings will be regularly monitored to ensure that programs and laboratories are meeting appropriate guidance. **Finally, supervisors of employees or students should use the Northwestern University [Portal](#) to report any new COVID-19 infections.**
- Return to Chicago campus will be in steps, the timing and progress of which will be determined by data on new cases, governmental requirements, and other factors.
- As a general premise, faculty, staff and students who can reasonably work from home should continue to do so; this will allow the returning work force to rehab our facilities at a density appropriate to need. Until further guidance is provided, no one can be required to come to campus unless they are designated as essential personnel.
- Be prepared for either tightening or loosening of occupancy and other guidance below, and the possibility of another shelter-in-place order, at any time.

Occupancy

- All personnel (including PIs and personnel in both wet and dry labs) who can continue to work from home should do so during the phased transition to full occupancy, projected to occur by the start of school year or end of the summer.
- Larger labs should organize in shifts (morning/afternoon, alternate days, etc.) wherever possible.
- In open labs, all adjacent PI's should coordinate to minimize the number of personnel onsite at any one time. Start with no more than a third of the lab at any time, while still maintaining appropriate distance between individuals.
- In smaller labs or in more contained spaces, limit personnel to 2-3/500sf, while maintaining appropriate distance between individuals.
- Where write-up stations are clustered, personnel should not work at adjacent stations.
- Utilize break areas or other common areas as an alternate to write-up stations to maintain distancing.
- Elevator usage should be limited to 4 riders, one in each corner; use of stairs is strongly encouraged for one floor up and two floors down.
- Personnel should limit on-campus presence to the facilities essential to their research.
- Doors may be propped open when labs are occupied to minimize touching of handles unless it poses a security or safety risk.
- Minimize eating and drinking on site.
- Entrances to buildings may be limited, and all personnel may be required to undergo temperature screening should that be implemented by the school or University.

Clinical Research Studies

General Considerations

- Patient/participant and staff safety should always be the primary consideration during research visits.
- Consideration should be given to staff and participant flow through corridors as well as within rooms.
- Clinical Research teams should follow clinical affiliate, Feinberg, and departmental guidelines for return. To the extent possible, distancing and appropriate PPE should be maintained throughout the visit.
- Research in clinical affiliate space (NMHC, Lurie Children's, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab) is generally defined as research done at Lurie Children's, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab and NMHC clinical buildings, including the NMH Feinberg, Galter, Arkes, and Lavin Pavilions, and Prentice Women's Hospital.
- Participant visits in clinical affiliate space may continue and/or restart as long as affiliate guidelines are followed.
- Guidelines from the IRB Office must be followed.

- The situation is dynamic and we may need to loosen or restrict clinical research activities as needed.
- For clinical research visits that can continue to take place virtually, please consider continuing these modified procedures. [Please refer to guidance from the Northwestern University IRB.](#)

Reactivation Plans

- After completing the [Pandemic Essentials training module](#) in myHR Learn, all PIs and/or research units should submit clinical and other human participant research reactivation plans to FSMReactivationPlans@northwestern.edu and not via LUMEN. These plans should contain information about studies that will be reactivated and how the potential spread of COVID-19 will be mitigated for staff and research participants. You may use the template posted for laboratory research and address the categories listed in the document, but focus the response on your human participant studies in spaces used for your human participant research. To the extent possible, Feinberg PI's should send a single plan for all their projects and/or research units; if plans must vary by study, separate submissions are recommended.
 - If your Department/unit has a process for reactivating research, be sure to gain approval from that leadership prior to submitting to the Dean's Office for approval. If your department doesn't have a separate process, submit directly to the FSM-reactivation email.
- All plans for research being performed in a Feinberg space, including leased space, will be reviewed. Participant visits in those spaces can resume/begin only once approved.
- If space and resources are limited, research teams should work within prioritization set by department/division/unit leadership to determine which studies/visits should resume first and consider shortening, or decreasing numbers of, visits.
- The initial period of the ramp up of research should be considered a pilot, and after a short period of time departments and/or PIs can review and adjust plans. Revisions to research plans should be submitted to FSMReactivationPlans@northwestern.edu.

Research in University-Managed Space

- Research that occurs in leased space must follow guidelines developed by management of those buildings.
- Pre-visit and COVID-19 entry screening requirements of the building, clinical affiliate, or Northwestern University IRB, as appropriate, should be followed. If the building does not have screening requirements, follow the IRB recommended screening process
- No one other than study team members and patient/participants are allowed on campus. However, exceptions allowed by a clinical affiliate (e.g.; companion needed to assist research participant) are permitted by this policy as well

Clinic Considerations

- Clinical research teams should follow CDC and clinical affiliate guidelines for reactivating clinical care. This includes for PPE, which can vary based on the procedures performed during the clinical research visit, as well as pre-visit screening, entry screening, physical distancing, and disinfecting/cleaning with adequate time between visits. See specific affiliate information below.
- Research that takes place within clinical affiliates' buildings should follow the timeline and protocols for reactivation that the clinical space is recommending.
- Work with the leadership of the clinical space to ensure the added volume or time of the research visit or portion of the clinical visit can be incorporated into the overall planned volume for space and resources.
- Once a study has been prioritized, teams should work with clinical affiliates' and University ancillary departments (such as diagnostic imaging, clinical laboratory, and research cores) to ensure they are reactivated and that the ancillary department can handle the volume of visits.
- Feinberg faculty using the Northwestern Medicine (NM) Clinical Research Unit and Lurie Children's CRU should follow phased reactivation policies and procedures of that (those) unit(s), and can plan their study visits with the relevant CRU (which will have a safety plan) without being required to submit a separate plan for review.
- Researchers working with Lurie Children's should refer to the following site for more information: <https://www.luriechildrens.org/en/for-healthcare-professionals/education/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-faq-for-lurie-childrens-healthcare-providers/>.
- Those that are reactivating research with NMHC clinics should work directly with the leadership of the clinical space to ensure the added volume or time of the research visit or portion of the clinical visit can be incorporated into the overall planned volume for space and resources.

PPE/Safety Considerations

- Before return, teams should learn about the infection control procedures for the space in which visits will be taking place in order to prepare. Consider things such as PPE requirements, room disinfection, screening requirements of participants prior to their arrival, and if there is an ability for a family member/friend or caregiver to accompany the participants from the entrance to the visit space.
- Provide the participant with information ahead of the visit in order to prepare. If the research visit is in conjunction with a visit for clinical purposes, work with the clinical department to ensure the information is clear to the participant and does not contradict the clinical affiliate guidance.
- Consider if research coordinator or other study staff should meet participants at the entrance.
- Depending on the requirements of the research space to optimize physical

distancing, study staff should confirm if they can be in the room with the participant during the visit.

- Study staff should review COVID-19 PPE requirements and relevant donning and doffing [guidance](#).
- When planning upcoming visits/screening visits, consider infection prevention/control procedures when establishing contact with participants.
- Aerosol generating procedures, such as spirometry, should not be performed by research staff at this time. Please contact Abby Cosentino-Boehm (a-cosentino-boehm@northwestern.edu) if you have questions.

Health Considerations

- Anyone who has a fever (>100.4), respiratory illness, cold, or is sick must stay home, even if symptoms do not appear to be those characteristic of COVID-19. Seeking medical evaluation for COVID-19 diagnosis, while at the discretion of the individual, is encouraged in general.
- Ongoing testing for Feinberg faculty, students, and staff members:
 - Medical students and clinical faculty involved in direct patient care should contact the COVID hotline at 312-472-6843 to be routed to NM Corporate Health for testing related to a potential workplace exposure to COVID-19.
 - All other faculty, staff, and students not directly involved in patient care should follow the University's COVID-19 testing protocol for symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals:
 - [Graduate and professional student testing information](#)
 - [Faculty and staff testing information](#)
- Cloth or procedure/surgical masks must be worn by all personnel on campus, including in laboratories, even when social distancing is being observed. Exceptions might include: when individuals are using potentially hazardous volatile or particulate materials, or when you are the only one in a microscopy room for several hours. Please consult Research Safety if you have questions about when it is unsafe to wear a mask in your research laboratory.
- [Office for Research Safety](#) will provide each laboratory with a pandemic supply kit, which includes masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant and signage to be posted. After submission of laboratory plans to LUMEN, coordinate delivery of the kit with Research Safety.
- Handwashing and sanitizers should be used several times during the work day.
- Spray sanitizer such as 70% ethanol should be located in all areas.
- If common equipment is used, use a booking sheet, put an "in use" sign up, do not share usage time. Wipe down after use with 70% ethanol.
- Wipe down all packages received before opening.
- The unit assigned the space is responsible for ensuring that sanitizer and PPE is available to labs as reactivation continues. Fisher Scientific stocks all necessary materials.

Meetings and Visitors

- All meetings or seminars should be held virtually, using Zoom or other similar platforms until further notice.
- Visitors other than patients are limited to those essential to research, including preventive maintenance and repair of equipment. Units must pre-register visitors to Feinberg buildings using the EasyLobby system. To set up system access, email fsm-research@northwestern.edu.
- Volunteers in labs are prohibited until further notice.

Transportation

- Use private modes of transportation to campus whenever feasible.
- Use apps such as Spot Hero to find discounted parking if garage parking is unavailable.
- Always wear a mask when using public or shared transit (CTA/Metra/shuttles).
- Travel at non-rush hours when possible.
- Consider biking or walking to campus; additional bike racks have been installed under the canopy at 345 E. Superior.

Resources

- Monitored FSM reactivation hotline (312-503-3437) and email fsm-reactivate@northwestern.edu
- Northwestern Medicine [video on properly using masks](#)
- Pl's send questions to fsm-research@northwestern.edu
- [Recipe](#) for hand sanitizer
- Aramark [cleaning protocol](#) for Feinberg
- Feinberg [COVID-19 site](#)
- Northwestern University Research [COVID-19 site](#)
- Northwestern Medicine [COVID-19 site](#)
- [Northwestern University COVID-19 and Campus Updates](#) site