Internal Management Procedure Title:		
Research Request Application Process		
Effective Date: November 15, 2004	**Revised**: June 15, 2025	**Authority:** N.J.S.A. 30:1B-6, NJDOC PS # ADM.001.007
Promulgating Office: Office of Compliance and Strategic Planning Office of the Chief of Staff		**Professional Association Standard cited:** N/A
Applicability: These Level 1/3 internal management procedures apply to all organizational units within the New Jersey Department of Corrections, as well as to potential academic researchers.		
Supersedes: *ADM.001.RES.001* dated September 25, 2023.		
Review Schedule: This document is scheduled for review on or about June 30, 2027 or as necessary.		

This document was reviewed and approved by:

Laura Salerno, PhD., Director, Office of Compliance and Strategic Planning on July 9, 2025

and

Kristina E. Chubenko, Esq., Chief of Staff on July 14, 2025.

Documentation of the reviews/approvals are maintained by the APPM Unit.

I. PURPOSE

To establish, set forth and maintain procedures for the submission and processing of a Research Application Package to the NJDOC Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB).

II. DEFINITIONS

The following words and terms, when used in this policy, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Academic Research means an undertaking of a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation which may include, but not be limited to, interviews, observation, review and evaluation of existing records and/or comparison of documents, designed to develop or contribute to a generalized body of knowledge.

Approved means the reviewer has reviewed all documentation provided with the Research Application Package and believes there is minimal risk/harm to participants, little to no interference to the safe and secure operations of NJDOC facilities, and it aligns with the NJDOC's, goals, mission, and values.

Approved with conditions means the reviewer has reviewed all documentation provided with Research Application Package and believes that while it aligns with goals, mission and values of the NJDOC, changes are needed so that there would be minimal risk/harm to participants and little to no interference to the safe and secure operations of NJDOC facilities.

Assent means the agreement by an individual not competent to give legally valid informed consent (e.g. a cognitively impaired person) to participate in research.

Commissioner means the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Corrections, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the NJDOC.

Confidential or Confidential information means any information related to NJDOC official business or NJDOC staff, not to be disclosed by staff to unauthorized persons, entities or agencies to include media as defined in this policy. "Confidential" applies to any government record designated as confidential pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Records Act at N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. and any other record and/or information deemed confidential pursuant to any other state or federal laws or state regulations. Examples of "confidential" include but are not limited to records and/or information relating to:

1. An individual, staff member, incarcerated person, NJDOC organizational unit or program which, if disclosed, would jeopardize the safety of any person and/or the safe, secure and orderly operation of the correctional facility or other NJDOC unit;
2. An informant document and/or statement;
3. A document pertaining to an individually identifiable crime victim(s) and/or family member(s) of a victim(s);
4. A comprehensive criminal history ("rap sheet");
5. A right of a staff member or incarcerated person for which a reasonable expectation of privacy exists such as but not limited to a medical, psychological, psychiatric, or treatment report, assessment, evaluation, summary, history, or recommendation;
6. Security issues regarding facility or plant design, staffing levels, scheduling, work and special assignments, deployment, and security related operating policies, procedures and post orders; and
7. Any disclosure of Departmental data that has the potential to negatively impact or threaten the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the NJDOC.

Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB) or Board means the review panel established to ensure that all research proposals are reviewed and, if approved, shall be conducted within the constraints of all organizational unit, departmental, state, and federal regulations, guidelines and requirements. At the completion of the DRRB review, the DRRB (Board) shall ensure that all recommendations to approve or disapprove research requests be presented to the Commissioner and other relevant executive staff for final review and determination of approval or disapproval prior to official notification to the requester. The DRRB shall consist of at least the following members:

1. Chairperson appointed by the Commissioner from Central Office staff;
2. Director, Office of Compliance & Strategic Planning;
3. An Executive Director, Healthcare Compliance Unit;
4. A member from the NJDOC senior executive staff who has expertise, experience or general knowledge relative to the area of general research and/or the subject being researched;
5. Assistant Commissioner, Division of Operations;
6. Assistant Commissioner, Division of Programs and Reintegration Services;
7. The facility administrator or designee of the NJDOC organizational unit housing the subject individual or population; and

8. A Corrections Ombudsperson/advocate from the Office of the Governor or their designee.

Disapproved means that the reviewer has reviewed all documentation provided with the Research Application Package and believes that allowing the research to be conducted would cause unnecessary risk/harm to the safety, security and well-being the subjects and/or interrupt the safe and secure operations of the NJDOC facilities, and/or the specific type of research detailed in the protocol is prohibited. This is only used when the reviewer feels there are no changes the researcher can make to the protocol for it to be acceptable.

Human Subject(s) mean living individual(s) about whom a researcher conducting research obtains:

1. Data through intervention or interaction with the individual;
2. Identifiable private information [Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.102(f)].

Incarcerated Person (IP) means a person who has been convicted of a crime and sentenced to a correctional facility under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of the NJDOC. The guidelines established by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) specify that an IP is considered a vulnerable population and their rights as human subjects should be thoroughly protected.

New Jersey Department of Corrections or NJDOC means that agency of the Executive Branch of the New Jersey State Government whose functions are to protect the public and provide for the custody, care, discipline, training, and treatment of persons committed to the State correctional facilities.

Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) means the office within the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides clarification and guidance on 45 CFR-46, develops educational programs and material, maintains regulatory oversight, provides advice on ethical and regulatory issues in biomedical and behavior research, and administers assurance of compliance and IRB registration programs.

Organizational Unit means a division, correctional facility or other work unit within the NJDOC.

Research Application Package means the collection of documents, including Form 980-I Application Form to Request Review of a Research Protocol (including Project Overview), required by ADM.001.RES.001 Research Request Application Process to be submitted to and reviewed by the DRRB by anyone seeking to conduct research with the NJDOC.

Staff means any person employed by the NJDOC. **Note:** This does not include contracted staff working within a prison facility (e.g., Gateway Foundation, Rutgers-University Correctional Healthcare [UCHC]).

III. POLICY

The New Jersey Department of Corrections encourages academic research involving incarcerated persons (IPs) or IP records in the custody of the NJDOC and NJDOC staff in accordance with the guidelines established in NJDOC Policy ADM.001.007 *NJDOC Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB)*. All requests for academic research are reviewed, and certified by the Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB) on approved NJDOC forms.

Upon completion of the review of the research request, the DRRB shall provide recommendations to the Commissioner and other executive staff that the research be approved, approved with conditions or disapproved. The Commissioner will make a final determination on the research, in accordance with the provisions of this policy and all applicable internal management procedures. All research must go through the DRRB process, no research may occur otherwise.

IV. PROCEDURES

Prior to submission, potential researchers should contact DRRB staff at the DOC research email to receive guidance on the application process. The inquiring researcher will be provided with the 980-I Form *Research Request Application* NJDOC Policy Statement *ADM.001.007 NJDOC Departmental Research Review Board*, and this internal management procedure, *ADM.001.RES.001 Research Application Process*.

DRRB approval by the Commissioner is required before any research involving human subjects, review of databases, files or records may be initiated.

A. **APPLICATION PROCEDURE:**

1. To begin the DRRB review process a complete Research Application Package must be summitted. The Research Application Package should include one copy of each of the following items (labelled according to the naming conventions below):
    - Form: 980-I *Research Application Form*
    - Attachment 1 Research Protocol: this will contain the following:
        - Research Summary—Detail the following:
            i. The purpose of the research (in non-technical terms);
            ii. The specific research questions and hypotheses;
            iii. A brief review of previous research, theories and how this protocol relates to work in this field;
            iv. How the research specifically relates to the NJDOC's goals mission and values; and
            v. The names and titles of everyone involved in the research protocol.
        - Research Design—Detail the following:
            i. Timeline for the entire project;
            ii. How the study will be completed, including but not limited to, the following:
                1. The number of human subjects to be interviewed;
                2. The specific research methods that will be utilized; and/or a description of the data analysis.
            iii. A breakdown of the estimated amount of time the human subjects will need to be available for the proposed research;
            iv. The informed consent process (if not applicable please state so);
            v. The expected outcomes of the study; and
            vi. Anticipated publication/dissemination of the research. (e.g. grant application, dissertation proposal)
    - Attachment 2 Qualifications of Research Team: Curriculum Vitae and human subjects' certification (if applicable) for each member of the research team.
    - If applicable:
        - Recruitment Material must include a contact name, a brief description of the research and inclusion criteria.

- Consent Form(s): please refer to section C INFORMED CONSENT FORM, on page 6 for details on the NJDOC's Consent Form requirements.
- Instrument: any questionnaire(s), survey(s), interview questions the research team intends to distribute/ask the study participants, including any script the research teams intends to use when interacting with the participants.
- Focus Group Guide: all questionnaires, surveys, interview schedules, tests, and any other test instruments proposed to be used
- Debriefing Statement
- IRB Approval Notices from Participating Institutions: letters of collaboration and IRB approval notices from institutions or organizations other than NJDOC that are participating in the research. If the research is exempt from IRB review, please attach a statement to that effect from the relevant IRB.
- Funding information.
    i. If the project is being submitted to a federal agency that requires DRRB review, the DRRB must be advised of this fact and also be provided the address of the person at the federal agency who is to be notified once the project has received DRRB approval.
        1. DRRB approval is not tantamount to a letter of support. Email grants@doc.nj.gov to request a letter of support. For additional information please visit the Grants Management Unit website: https://www.state.nj.us/corrections/pages/grants.html

B. BASIC DRRB REVIEW CRITERIA:

1. In order to approve research, the DRRB shall determine whether all of the following requirements have been satisfied, as applicable:
    a. Risks to subjects are minimized, by using procedures that are consistent with a sound research design and that do not unnecessarily expose the subjects to risk;
    b. Risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to the subjects, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result;
    c. The design of the study does not interfere with the day-to-day operational integrity of a NJDOC prison or RCRP/Assessment Treatment Center;
    d. Selection of subjects is equitable, and the problems of research involving vulnerable populations are adequately addressed;
    e. Informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject and will be appropriately documented;
    f. The research plan makes adequate provision for monitoring the data to ensure the safety of the subjects.
    g. Adequate provisions are made to protect the privacy of the subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data.

h. Appropriate additional safeguards have been included in the research plan when some or all of the subject incarcerated persons are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence.

i. The purpose of the research is consistent with the environmental setting in which it will be conducted.

j. The research will unduly burden the NJDOC's time and resources; and

k. The research is aligned with the NJDOC's goals, mission and values.

C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

1. The Informed Consent Form that is provided to each subject must be written in non-technical terms, at a sixth-grade reading level, with non-technical explanation of any specialized terms. It must include the following:

   a. A statement that the study involves research, an explanation of the purposes of the research, the expected duration of the subject's participation, a description of the procedures to be followed, and identification of any procedures that are experimental.

   b. A description of any reasonably foreseeable *risks* or discomforts to the subject.

   c. A description of any *benefits* to the subjects or other persons that may reasonably be expected to result from the research.

      - In accordance with N.J.A.C. 10A:1-10, incarcerated persons shall not receive any compensation for participating in research.

   d. A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.

      - "Certificate of Confidentiality," which legally prevents any governmental agency from obtaining the researcher's records has been issued for this study, please attach a copy with the application.

   e. A statement describing that any disclosure of information related to the following will not remain confidential and will be reported to the appropriate authorities:

      - Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) allegations;
      - Abuse in prisons;
      - Acts of violence, including but not limited to escape and riots; and
      - Intent to harm themselves.

   f. An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.

      - With regards to research subjects' rights, the informed consent must use the exact wording: *"If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Director, Office of Compliance and Strategic Planning at NJDOC at (609) 292-4036 x5625."*

   g. A statement that participation is voluntary, that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the

subject may discontinue participation *at any time* without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

i. If the research involves the collection of identifiable private information, one of the following statements must appear:

- Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information and that, after such a removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject or legally authorized representative.
- The subject's information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

j. Anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's or the legally authorized representative's consent

k. Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.

l. The procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.

m. The approximate number of subjects involved in the study.

n. A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research, which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation, will be provided to the subject.

o. A statement regarding whether clinically relevant research results, including individual research results, will be disclosed to subjects, and if so, under what conditions.

2. Formatting:

a. If the consent form is more than one page, include a notation, "Subject's Initials _____", at the bottom of each page except the signature page.

b. If non-English speaking subjects will be involved, a consent form that has been translated into the relevant language is required, if applicable.

c. Signature lines:

i. For Principal Researcher and the subject, with corresponding lines for the date of each signature, are required.
ii. For a legally authorized representative or minor subject may also be necessary, depending upon the categories of subjects that are involved.
iii. For a witness signature is not required in most cases; exceptions are oral consent verification (below) and situations in which a legally authorized representative signs for the subject.

d. If the protocol involves videotaping, audio-taping, or photographing of subjects, the consent form must include either a separate statement of agreement for these procedures within the consent document, with signature line, or an addendum to the consent form describing the recording procedure with a statement of agreement and signature line.

- The purpose of the distinct signature for these procedures is to ensure that the subject is aware of their inclusion, and if the study design permits, to allow the subject to participate in the study without being recorded.
- Provide either:
  a) a detailed written form that incorporates the elements of informed consent, OR
  b) a brief written document stating that the elements of informed consent will be presented orally to the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative and witnessed by a third party. In either case, a copy of the document should be given to the person signing the form.
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e. A written summary of the oral presentation should be included in the Research Application Package.

D. THE DRRB REVIEW:

All proposals shall be reviewed by the full DRRB Panel. Final review and decision on DRRB protocols are decided by the Commissioner after their review of the Research Application Package and the recommendations from the Board.

All DRRB proposals will receive a letter indicating approval or non-acceptance of the research protocol. Letters approving a research protocol are not Letters of Support. A formal Letter of Support must be obtained through the Grants Management Unit.

E. ADDITIONAL PROCESSES

1. Review by the New Jersey State Ethics Commission (SEC)
   a. If any member of the research team is an employee of the NJDOC, and the research is being completed with a private entity, either within the State of New Jersey or out-of-state, a Joint Venture Form needs to be completed and provided to the NJDOC Equal Employment Division/Ethics, who will then review it and forward it to the State Ethics Commission (SEC) for final approval.
   b. The Joint Venture Form needs to be completed even where there are multiple parties involved, as only one private entity generates the need for SEC approval. Completion of this form will be facilitated by the DRRB and is required after final approval of the research is received.
   c. If the participants of the study are NJDOC staff, NJDOC Equal Employment Division/Ethics will review the protocol to determine any parameters that must be met for staff participation to be permissible.
2. Continuing Review
   a. The principal researcher is required to submit The NJDOC Research Progress report to the DRRB every six (6) months.
   b. The report should be accompanied by any documentation from the research team's IRB approving the continuation of the research protocol.
3. Changes

a. For any of the following changes, the principal researcher must submit a Research Extension/Addendum Form to the DRRB for Review:

i. Any change to increase the number of subjects required
ii. Any change to the subject selection criteria.
iii. Change to the research design
iv. Changes in the researchers working on this protocol.

1. New members of the research team must submit all the required paperwork that the other members of the research team were required to submit when the protocol was initially approved.

b. Upon approval of the modification, the DRRB will issue a revised notice of approval. This should follow an amendment from the university IRB.

4. Mandatory Reporting

a. Adverse Events:

i. All adverse and/or unexpected events experienced by participants in research studies must be reported immediately to the DRRB.

b. The DRRB has an obligation to report the following to the OHRP:

i. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others;
ii. Any serious or continuing noncompliance with 45 CFR part 46;
iii. Any serious of continuing noncompliance with determinations of the IRB; and
iv. Any suspension or termination of IRB approval.

F. MISCELLANEOUS

1. For further information, and for discussion of problems arising in particular studies, please call Office of Compliance and Strategic Planning at (609) 292-4036 x5625 or email doc_research@doc.nj.gov for assistance about the DRRB process and conducting research with NJDOC.

2. SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Director, Compliance and Strategic Planning
New Jersey Department of Corrections
P.O. Box 863
Trenton, NJ 08625-0863

V. INSTRUCTIONS

All affected organizational unit managers within the New Jersey Department of Corrections shall be responsible for following the procedures detailed herein, as well as those within policy statement ADM.001.007 New Jersey Department of Corrections Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB).

Office of Compliance and Strategic Planning staff shall be responsible for reviewing and updating this document, as necessary. NJDOC staff plus UCHC staff, any contracted vendor must also adhere to this policy.

VI. CROSS REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND DOCPS/IMP

DOCPS/IMP/Document Number	Title	Effective/Revision Date
ADM.001.007	New Jersey Department of Corrections Departmental Research Review Board (DRRB)	Pending revised June 2025
45 CFR - 46	Code of Federal Regulations TITLE 45 PART 46 PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS	November 13, 2001
N.J.A.C.10A:1-10.1	General Research Provisions	August 6, 2007

VII. APPLICABLE FORMS

Form Number	Form Title	Effective/ Revision Date
980-I	Research Application	Pending revised June 2025
	NJ DOC Request for Research Extension/Addendum Form	Pending June 2025
	NJDOC Research Progress Report	Pending June 2025
	Joint Venture Form	