Baystate Health | UMass Chan Medical School

BAYSTATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Consider becoming a volunteer member of the Baystate Institutional Review Board.

Human Research Protection Program website



WHAT IS AN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD?

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee of research experts and members of the community who review research projects that study people. In the United States, all research that involves people, their data, or their biospecimens must be approved by an IRB before it starts. IRB review makes sure human subject research meets high ethical standards, as well as federal and local laws.
IRB members gain experience reviewing medical research. IRB service also offers an opportunity to hear about current research in the Baystate community. Members participate in ethical discussions relating to current studies and help represent the thoughts and concerns of the surrounding community.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE?

Members are asked to attend one board meeting per month. The meetings last about 2 hours and take place on Zoom. Members typically spend 3-4 hours per month preparing for the meeting. Members must have reliable access to the internet and be able to participate in Zoom meetings with their camera on.

WHAT WILL I REVIEW FOR THE MEETING?

Each member is asked to review a description of research plan (protocol), and consent forms. Scientists on the board are asked to focus on the medical parts. We ask non-scientific community members to focus on the consent forms to make sure that they are clear, accurate and easy to understand for patients who will be reading them.
The protocols come from all departments at Baystate and represent a wide variety of topics.

HOW DO I GET THE INFORMATION FOR REVIEW?

Protocols are provided through our on-line submission system, IRBNet and all members post their comments through the system. Members need to be comfortable working on computers and web-based applications.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PRIMARY AND AN ALTERNATE IRB MEMBER?

An alternate member is someone who fills in for a primary IRB member who is not available to vote at an IRB meeting. The alternate may only vote when filling in for the primary member

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MEETING?

All members of the board collaboratively discuss their comments related to each protocol and decide whether it should move forward.

HOW AM I TRAINED?

All new members must complete an orientation session, observe at least one IRB meeting and attend a session to learn about our on-line submission system, IRBNet. Each member must also complete online education modules about IRB Members, Responsible Conduct of Research and Human Subjects Protection. Members learn the function of the IRB, regulations surrounding human subject research and how to apply them.

In 2010, Baystate received full accreditation from the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). The organization maintained this status by earning an additional five-year reaccreditation from AAHRPP in June 2023.
As the "gold seal," AAHRPP accreditation offers assurances—to research participants, researchers, sponsors, government regulators, and the general public—that an HRPP is committed to scientifically and ethically sound research and continuous improvement.

Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. — Full AAHRPP Accreditation