

# Oak Street Campus Research Institutes

## Return to Onsite Research

### Guidance & Policy Due to COVID-19

#### Overview

This document outlines policies and guidance for all personnel to enable a staged approach to resumption of onsite research and research support activity at BC Children's Hospital, BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre and the Oak Street campus research institutes — including BC Children's Hospital Research Institute (BCCHR), Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI) and BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services Research Institute (BCMHSUSRI).

In June 2020, after curtailing the majority of onsite research activity in March 2020, the Oak Street campus Research Institutes will begin a gradual resumption of onsite research. Research and scholarship onsite are limited to reviewed and approved work that requires onsite resources and cannot be done remotely (See *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes Return to Onsite Research Intake Form*).

Oak Street campus Principal Investigators, trainees and staff must continue working remotely whenever possible, in keeping with public health guidelines.

A separate document, the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan*, details the foundation of our response to COVID-19, and should be reviewed in full before reviewing this document. The *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan* provides the logistical specifics and risk management standards to which all personnel and site visitors at BCCHR-managed sites must adhere.

Research spaces managed directly by PHSA and not BCCHR should follow the safety plan for their area. However, BCCHR Facilities is working in cooperation with PHSA management to ensure procedures and policies are as consistent as possible and is supporting all Oak Street campus research spaces.

This document, the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes Return to Onsite Research: Guidance & Policy Due to COVID-19*, details the guiding principles behind the staged resumption of onsite research activity, the criteria to resume onsite work, how to apply, and the process behind the review and approval of applications. It also provides guidance and policies for supervisors and occupants concerning the numerous other site and institute-specific considerations.

This document and the *Safety Plan* will be updated if and when mandated requirements from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), WorkSafeBC, Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) or the University of British Columbia (UBC) are changed. For more information, visit <https://covid19.ubc.ca/>.

Any changes to this document will be communicated, through email, by the leadership of the Oak Street campus research institutes.

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## 1. Guiding principles

The following principles, also adopted by the UBC Faculty of Medicine, guide decision-making and processes related to staged resumption of onsite activities:

- The health and well-being of faculty, health professionals, trainees, staff, patients and the public are paramount.
- The orders, notices and guidance of the PHO, WorkSafeBC, PHSA and UBC will be followed.
- Approval for onsite activities (including research, education and administration) will only be granted to those who require onsite resources and cannot conduct their work remotely. All activities that can be done remotely must continue to be done remotely.
- There will be a staged and coordinated approach to increasing activity across each building and site (includes university, health authority and clinical research spaces).
- Staged resumption of onsite activity may need to be reversed and stricter curtailment conditions imposed in response to public health guidance or changes to the situation at any particular site.
- Equity and personal circumstances will be considered in evaluating how to plan and conduct resumption of onsite activities.

The guidelines in this document apply to all researchers within the Oak Street campus research institutes, including those who have existing exemptions for ongoing work.

## 2. Stages of increased onsite activity

**A gradual re-start does not mean a return to normal workplace conditions.**

Onsite activity at the Oak Street campus research institutes are not likely to return to a pre-COVID-19 level until the PHO declares that the pandemic is over and regular workplace activities can resume.

The increase of onsite activities is gradual and staged. The number of stages will depend on:

1. Directives from the PHO, WorkSafeBC, PHSA and UBC;
2. The ability of onsite personnel to comply with mandated safety standards; and
3. The known risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and spread on the Oak Street campus.

Progression through these stages is dependent on:

1. Directives from the PHO, WorkSafeBC, PHSA and UBC;
2. The severity of the current COVID-19 pandemic in B.C.; and
3. Incidents of COVID-19 in the Oak Street campus research community.

The health and safety of our personnel are of primary importance, and scaling back of onsite research activity and onsite access will occur if necessary.

This document outlines the details of Stage 1 and what is planned for Stage 2.

#### Features of Stage 1:

- Onsite activity will be kept to an absolute minimum.
- All activities that can be done remotely will continue to be done remotely.
- All onsite activities must be formally approved by Oak Street campus research institutes leadership along with clinical program leadership if applicable (See *section 4. Application and approval process for onsite research activities*).
- Only high priority onsite research activities will be approved (See *section 3. High priority research activities*).
- The total number of people allowed onsite and within labs will be limited to enable physical distancing.
- Online COVID-related training for all personnel returning to onsite work will be required before access is granted.
- Access will be limited to the following hours: 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday — to enable cleaning between shifts. There is no 24 hour access. Limited weekend access may be granted on a case-by-case basis.
- Newly appointed personnel who are not familiar with the buildings/lab and have not yet received lab-specific training are not allowed onsite. Volunteers (high school, undergraduate) will not be permitted onsite during Stage 1.

#### Features of Stage 2:

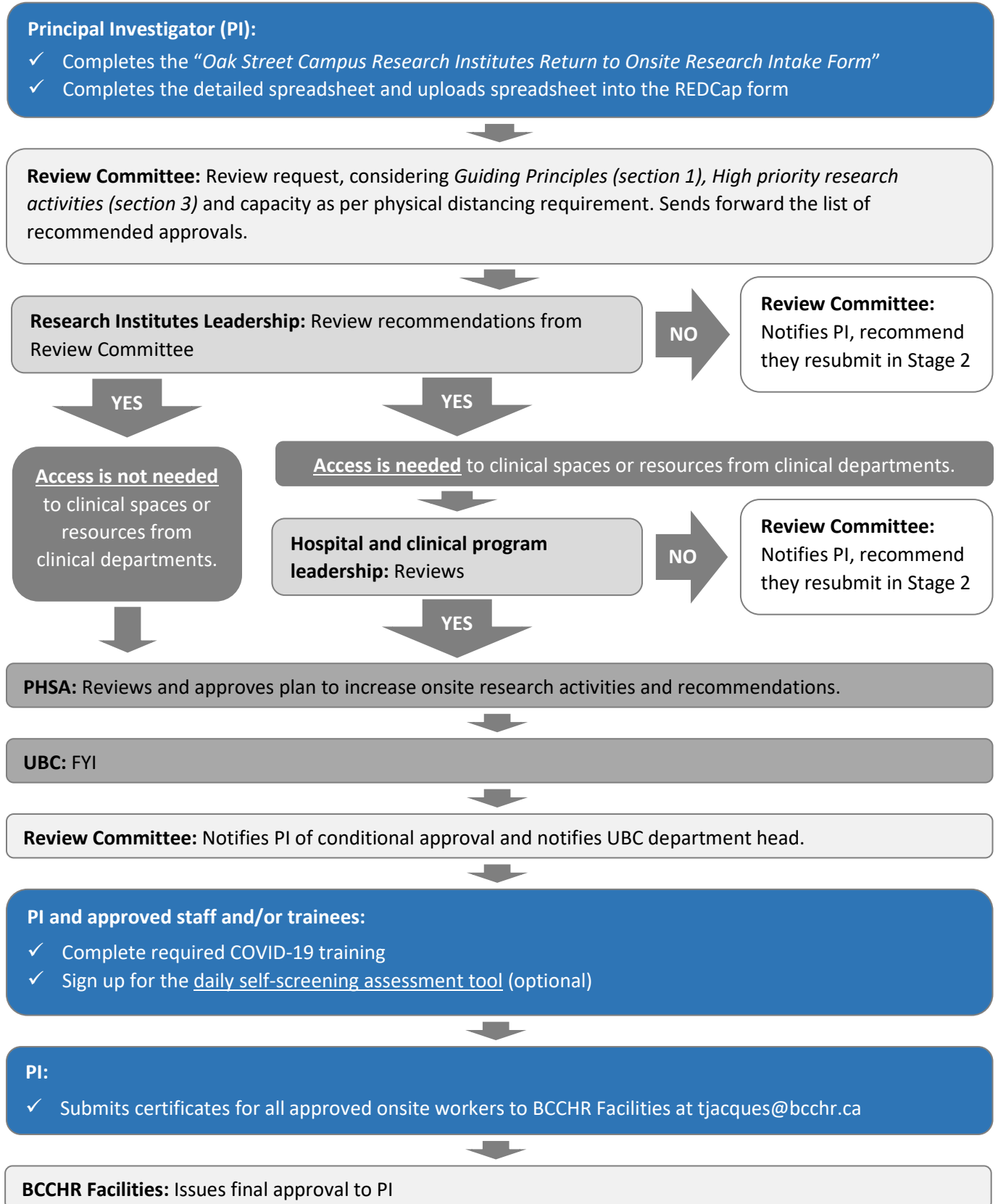
- Details will depend on compliance during Stage 1 and ability of all personnel to comply with mandated safety standards.
- Depend on guidance and directives from PHO, WorkSafeBC, PHSA and UBC.
- All activities that can be done remotely will continue to be done remotely.
- Lower priority onsite research activities may be allowed to start.
- The total number of personnel onsite may be increased.
- Newly appointed personnel may be granted some accommodation for doing onsite work, provided that all required training has been completed.

### 3. High priority research activities

The Oak Street campus research institutes definition of "high priority research activities" closely aligns with definitions released by the UBC Faculty of Medicine, and includes:

- COVID-19 research
- Current research activities that were granted an exemption to continue during the research curtailment period
- Critical clinical research concurrent with clinical care
- Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who need to be onsite to complete work for graduation or career advancement
- Core research facilities staff who are essential for approved onsite research
- Upcoming time-sensitive activities that cannot be done remotely and require onsite research access
- Equity considerations for those that cannot work from home due to personal reasons

#### 4. Application and approval process for onsite research activities



## 5. Considerations for investigators, trainees and staff

All personnel must adapt their behaviour and their work to ensure a safe resumption of onsite research and research support activity. Always comply with the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan*.

1. **Every day, before you come to work, assess your health** using the [daily self-screening assessment tool](#) and/or posted checklists. According to the BCCDC, the common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat and painful swallowing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, inform your supervisor and call 8-1-1 or complete the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#), and follow the directions provided. You must not come to work.

2. **Develop an individual commuting plan that minimizes proximity to other people.** Consider cycling, walking or driving instead of public transit. If using public transit, try to maintain physical distancing at all times and follow hygiene recommendations (frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, etc.). If you need access to the BCCHR bike cage, submit a ticket through the support portal at [support.bcchr.ca](#) (accessible with a BCCHR, PHSA or UBC username and password).
3. **Always maintain a minimum distance of two metres between persons.** This applies whether you are in an office or any common or shared space.
  - a. Communicate via digital means whenever possible.
  - b. Minimize physical interaction (e.g., no in-person meetings unless absolutely necessary, seminars, journal clubs, or personal discussions).
  - c. Minimize physical social interactions (e.g., : no socializing in a kitchen, eat your lunch at a safe distance from others).

NOTE: The above assumes persons involved are not part of the same household or "bubble."

4. **Always comply with the maximum occupancy of each office or open workstation.** Facilities has posted signage listing the maximum occupancy for all work areas. See *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan* document or relevant PHSA policies if working in clinical areas.
5. **Minimize time spent at the workplace by working from home whenever possible.**

6. **Disinfect shared workspaces and equipment at the start and end of your shift.** Clean and disinfect surfaces and shared equipment when you start or end your shift or whenever visibly soiled. These include light switches, door handles, countertops, mobile devices and keyboards/mice. BCCHR facilities will provide disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer (See *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan*).
7. **Consider COVID-related personal protective equipment (PPE) needs.** PPE is considered "the last line of defense." Other methods of protection, such as physical distancing, good hygiene practices, and administrative steps (like work shift rotations) must be utilized first.

Labs are still responsible for purchasing PPE that they normally use for their procedures or experiments and adhering to PPE requirements and decontamination procedures according to their relevant containment level protocols.

Lab PPE must not be worn outside of labs. Please remove it before entering elevators or other public spaces.

BCCHR Facilities is supplying additional PPE and supplies that are needed due to COVID-19 safety concerns. Surgical masks will be made available for those who choose to wear them onsite. At this time, there is no official requirement from UBC or PHSA to wear them. N95 masks will be available to those who require N95s in their protocols.

Since we cannot guarantee the cleanliness of masks brought in from offsite, all personnel and visitors (including research participants) are asked to not use them when onsite. See *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan*.

Researchers working within clinical settings may require additional safety training and should adhere to the clinical program's PPE considerations and procedural documents if applicable.

Please be respectful of anyone's choice to wear or not wear a mask.

## 6. Considerations for Principal Investigators and supervisors

Principal Investigators and supervisors are responsible for enforcing compliance with these guidelines and the directives in the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan* or applicable PHSA policies.

### 1. Plan for minimal onsite activities.

- a. Establish a list of personnel who require onsite access.
- b. Encourage and support staff and trainees to continue working remotely when possible.

### 2. Put physical distancing and the safety of your team first when planning your request to resume onsite activities. All personnel must also adhere to [UBC's working alone procedure](#).

- a. Consider training needs and ability to work without supervision in relation to physical distancing. Those who require research specific training that cannot be completed while adhering to physical distancing are not appropriate for inclusion at Stage 1.
- b. Consider space and time required for tasks when scheduling work. If several people need to work in a shared space where physical distancing cannot be reliably accommodated, the unit can establish a shift system. Coordinate shifts within and between groups so all areas remain below the established maximum occupancy.

NOTE: Access to the BCCHR buildings will be limited to the following hours: 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday — to enable cleaning between shifts. If you work in a hospital building, please check with building maintenance for hours.

- c. Your group's work plan and routine must be outlined in the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes Return to Onsite Research Intake Form* (See section 4). Facilities must be notified of any changes to the plan before instituting the change. In order to manage physical distancing requirements, research groups are encouraged to setup online calendars to coordinate the use of shared equipment and spaces.

**Principal Investigators, supervisors, groups or areas/floors can initiate risk management procedures above and beyond those outlined in this document and the *Oak Street Campus Research Institutes COVID-19 Safety Plan*, as long as they are not counter to any directives from the *Safety Plan*, the PHO, WorkSafeBC, PHSA and UBC.** If the setup of your work areas or the comfort level of personnel are such that the maximum capacity is difficult to ensure, it is acceptable to designate a lower capacity limit for your areas. Please notify Facilities so that they are aware.



## 7. Additional considerations for specific work areas

Additional considerations and risk management options are detailed in the following sections for specific work environments. Please feel free to adopt these for your work area, as appropriate. However, as there are both HR and safety considerations involved in establishing all work procedures, please consult with Facilities and/or the BCCHR Safety Committee before instituting any additional procedures for your group that are not already detailed below.

### Multiple Occupant Washrooms

It can be difficult to manage physical distancing requirements for multiple occupant washrooms, even with a maximum capacity of 2 people. If personnel in your areas are concerned about this, consider advising users to announce when they are exiting and entering in order to warn others to stay clear.

### Considerations for Wet Labs

In some cases, it's possible that personnel in adjacent bays, working directly across from each other, face to face at the bench, could be close to the 2 metre physical distancing limit. Consider staggering the bench work areas so that no personnel are working directly across from each other.

### Considerations for Clinical Spaces

See Appendix 1.

## 8. Communications Plan

This document will be shared electronically within the Oak Street campus research institutes communities and posted on the BCCHR Research Hub at [hub.bcchr.ca](https://hub.bcchr.ca) (accessible with a BCCHR, PHSA or UBC username and password).

Additional communications activities will be carried out by WHRI and BCMHSUSRI.

## 9. Required Training

Prior to returning to campus, all Oak Street research institutes community members will be required to complete an online UBC training course.

## 10. Appendix 1: Considerations for clinical research

PHSA is working on a detailed Recovery/Go-Forward Plan that aligns with the provincial COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy communicated by B.C.'s Premier on May 6. This is expected to include the resumption of some previously postponed elective surgeries at BC Children's Hospital and BC Women's Hospital and supporting diagnostic imaging services, and is to be followed by the resumption of services like more ambulatory clinics. For more information on this transition, please visit:

<http://www.phsa.ca/staff-resources/covid-19-resources-for-staff>

The Oak Street campus research institutes are working closely with PHSA authorities to develop an approach to increasing onsite clinical research activities. We will update these documents as new developments occur.

Please note:

1. **Investigators must apply to resume or launch onsite clinical research activities** through the *Application and approval process for onsite research activities (section 4)*. Previously exempted projects must apply again.
2. **This intake process replaces the pre-existing exemption process** for essential clinical research including new COVID-19 studies and essential research that offers a direct therapeutic benefit for its participants (or would result in significant negative impacts to patient care if further delayed or not offered).
3. **Requests to resume clinical research activities will be approved on a case-by-case basis.** Reviewers will consider guiding principles (see section 1) and prioritization (see section 3). Once this is complete, PIs should obtain approval from clinical programs leadership. See *Application and approval process for onsite research activities (section 4)*.
4. **Study teams must ensure clear communication of COVID-19 risks to study participants** prior to all onsite visits:
  - o Discuss with participants the risks and mitigation strategies in place to protect them when they come for an onsite visit. Remind study participants that participation in research is voluntary and that they are free to choose to not attend the research visit or withdraw from the study.
5. **Study teams are responsible for screening all participants (and caregivers) for symptoms consistent with COVID-19** or known contact with a COVID-19-positive individual within the last 14 days prior to their arrival onsite.