



Program on Biosecurity and Biosafety Policy
Office of the Director
National Institutes of Health
6705 Rockledge Drive
Suite 750, MSC 7985
Bethesda, MD 20892-7985
(301) 496-9838 (Phone)
(301) 496-9839 (Fax)

Date: November 20, 2014

To: Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Chairs
Biological Safety Officers
Contacts for IBCs

From: Allan C. Shipp, M.H.A. 
Director of Outreach
Program on Biosecurity and Biosafety Policy

Subject: Access to IBC Meeting Minutes and Other Documentation

Recently, the NIH Program on Biosecurity and Biosafety Policy has received queries regarding the provision of IBC meeting minutes and other documentation to the public.

Integral to the *NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules (NIH Guidelines)* are the principles of public participation and transparency. Examples of these founding principles are embedded throughout the *NIH Guidelines* including the requirements for at least two unaffiliated members on the IBC and encouragement that IBC meetings be open to interested members of the public.

In addition, [Section IV-B-2-a-\(7\)](#) of the *NIH Guidelines* requires institutions to provide meeting minutes and certain other documents to the public upon request. This includes documents that institutions must provide to funding agencies (such as NIH) that those agencies would have to make available to the public. Reports of incidents as described under [Section IV-B-2-b-\(7\)](#) and in [Appendix G](#) of the *NIH Guidelines* are an example of this latter type of documentation. We encourage all institutions to utilize mechanisms that promote public accessibility to such documentation.

In keeping with the *NIH Guidelines*, institutions may redact certain information from these documents if there are privacy or proprietary concerns. However, information that is widely available from numerous other sources (e.g., agent names and names of principal investigators) is not generally considered private or proprietary. We encourage all institutions to review the frequently asked questions (FAQs) on our website about public transparency expectations under the *NIH Guidelines*. The FAQs can be accessed at:

http://osp.od.nih.gov/sites/default/files/resources/IBC_Meetings_and_Minutes_FAQs.pdf

If you have any questions about the preparation of, or public access to, IBC minutes or other materials, or require any clarification on your institution's responsibilities under the *NIH Guidelines* please contact the NIH Program on Biosecurity and Biosafety Policy at PBPP@od.nih.gov or (301) 496-9838.