

# Establishing a School SRC/IRB Committee



**COASTAL BEND REGIONAL  
SCIENCE FAIR**

AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI  
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Each participating campus will establish an Institutional Review Board and a Scientific Review Committee. These two committees can be combined into one SRC/IRB committee. The purpose of the SRC/IRB is to review **ONLY** project proposals that involve human subjects, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents, and hazardous chemicals, activities or devices. Most projects will not require review by your SRC/IRB committee. **ALL** project proposals require review and approval by the Adult Sponsor **PRIOR** to experimentation.

## **Local-level Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee that must evaluate the potential physical and/or psychological risk of research involving human subjects. All proposed human research must be reviewed and approved by an IRB before experimentation begins. This includes review of any surveys or questionnaires to be used in a project.

Federal regulations require local community involvement; therefore an IRB should be established at the school level to evaluate human research projects. An IRB at the school level must consist of a minimum of **three members**.

An IRB must include:

- a. An educator
- b. A school administrator (preferably, a principal or vice principal), and
- c. One of the following who is knowledgeable and capable of evaluating the physical and/or psychological risk involved in a given study: a medical doctor, physician's assistant, registered nurse, a psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed social worker or licensed clinical professional counselor.

## **Local-level Scientific Review Committee (SRC)**

A Scientific Review Committee (SRC) is a group of qualified individuals that is responsible for evaluation of student research, certifications, research plans and exhibits for compliance with the Rules and pertinent laws and regulations.

Any proposed research in the following areas must be reviewed and approved **BEFORE** experimentation: projects involving vertebrates and potentially hazardous biological agents. (Human studies reviewed and approved by a properly constituted IRB do not have to be reviewed a second time by the school's SRC.)

A SRC must consist of a minimum of three persons. The SRC must include:

- a. A biomedical scientist (Ph.D., M.D., D.V.M., D.D.S., D.O., or PharmD)
- b. An educator
- c. At least one other member

**Additional Expertise:** Many projects will require additional expertise to properly evaluate (for instance, extended knowledge of biosafety or of human risk groups.) If animal research is involved, at least one member must be familiar with proper animal care procedures. If the SRC needs an expert as one of its members and one is not in the immediate area, then documented contact with an external expert is appropriate and encouraged. If needed, school science fair coordinators/teachers are encouraged to contact the regional science fair director at [cbsciencefair@tamucc.edu](mailto:cbsciencefair@tamucc.edu) for help in identifying a specialist in a specific area.

Consider combining the IRB and SRC committee by including a health professional, biomedical scientist, school administrator, and an educator in one committee. Meetings can be done in person as projects require approval, but they can also be completed at a distance through scanned or faxed documents and consensus by e-mail.

The local SRC/IRB can be at a campus or district level. A campus level committee will provide a more efficient turn-around for proposal review and approval. A district level committee will allow less individuals required per district to fill the committee requirements, but require more time required for the review process.

## REGIONAL SCIENTIFIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

A Scientific Review Committee exists at the regional science fair level. The regional science fair SRC reviews the forms and the research plan for all projects registered to compete at the regional level to ensure that students have followed all applicable Rules. The regional science fair SRC is made up of a group of adults knowledgeable about research regulations. The Intel ISEF SRC reviews the Checklist for Adult Sponsor (I), Abstract, Student Checklist (IA), Research Plan and Approval Form (IB) in addition to all other required forms for students who enter the Intel ISEF. They are also available to assist local fairs and local SRC/IRB committees with problems they may be having and work with fair coordinators and teachers to resolve them.

The regional science fair SRC is the final authority on projects that are qualified to compete in the regional science fair. In some cases, the regional science fair SRC may have questions about particular projects. Usually, after students explain their procedures and research to the regional science fair SRC, a simple corrective measure is prescribed (e.g., contacting the Designated Supervisor to confirm a detail, or rewriting an abstract for purposes of clarification).

It is important that students retain all original signed forms. Do not send original forms to the regional science fair.