



MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT

ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

SUBJECT: RESEARCH
SECTION: Organization of the Agency

POLICY NUMBER: 1-080
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IMPLEMENTATION DATE: March 4, 1992
REVISION DATE: May 19, 1993, June 1, 1995
November 21, 1996, June 15, 2000 *
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2009 April 1*, 2010 June 23*

APPROVED BY: Board of Health
SIGNATURE:

PURPOSE

To ensure all research in which the Health Unit collaborates or participates honours the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) mission statement.

To co-ordinate research activities undertaken at MLHU.

To support the integration of evidence-based decision making with the delivery of programs and services.

To ensure that findings from research conducted at Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) and from projects undertaken by researchers affiliated with MLHU are disseminated locally to program staff and managers and more broadly through a variety of media, e.g., peer reviewed publications, symposia, conferences, newsletters, etc.

To maximize the impact of resources dedicated to research and to the dissemination and uptake of research findings.

To ensure appropriate ethical assurances are sought and maintained.

POLICY

Research undertaken by the Middlesex-London Health Unit will be directed towards identification of the determinants of health, public health planning, program evaluation and policy analysis. It will be practical, will often involve community, and will be defined by actual and emerging public health issues (Ontario Public Health Teaching Health Unit Program – Statement of Mission and Fundamental Principles, September 10, 1991, p.2)

Applied public health research which involves MLHU staff, clients or resources will contribute to the development or refinement of sound public health practice, and meet recognized scientific/methodological, ethical, and protection of privacy standards.

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) as standing committee of the Directors Committee will ensure the terms of this policy are met.

Researchers conducting research through MLHU are expected to disseminate their findings.

* Indicates date reviewed by Directors Committee

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PROCEDURE

1.0 Required Research Advisory Committee (RAC) reviews

- (a) The RAC will review all research proposals when:
- PHRED Researcher/Educators are involved notwithstanding the exclusions identified in (b) and (c);
 - An investigator is a staff member of the Health Unit;
 - Personal information is being used or collected for purposes beyond maintaining an individual's health or client record. Personal information is defined as recorded information about an identifiable individual. Personal information may include an individual's name, address, telephone number, age, sex, personal opinions or views;
 - The analysis of record level data owned or accessed through MLHU is involved in a project designed to answer a research question;
 - Complex program evaluations including the evaluation of specific interventions are being conducted that involve MLHU's clients or staff (regardless of who is conducting the research evaluation);
 - Evaluations are being conducted on new programs.
- (b) Research projects that do not require a RAC Review include:
- Student projects done as course work while on placement at MLHU provided the project is not part of an ongoing research project by an investigator being conducted with the intention of publishing.
 - Requests for assistance in recruiting participants by external researchers in which MLHU is not participating or sponsoring the project. Assistance might include posting a flyer, attending an event to describe the study or including a notice of the study in a health unit mailing. Under these circumstances, the responsible Director or Manager may approve such requests. The standardized form, "Request to Recruit Participants for External Research Projects" is available as a guide to facilitate decision-making and may be found through contacting the RAC Chair or on the MLHU Intranet.
- (c) Further exemptions and inventory tracking
Proposals which meet all the following criteria will not require RAC review, but should be forwarded for tracking and inclusion in the Research Inventory at a RAC meeting:
- Research project has been granted ethics approval at the University Level;
 - The project scope is outside of MLHU jurisdiction (i.e. it does not involve clients of MLHU or the Health Unit's resources);
 - Another public health agency has reviewed the proposal.

The RAC is available to provide informal consultations as needed for all projects as well as for emerging projects and/or other projects that may not require a formal RAC review.

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2.0 Review of Proposals

- 2.1 The principal investigator submits a one-page summary of the study objective(s) and design to the Service Area Director(s) whose clients or staff may be involved as subjects in the study. Research conducted by health unit staff or PHRED faculty that does not involve Health Unit clients or staff as subjects will be submitted by the Director to whom those Health Unit staff or faculty report.
- 2.2 On receipt of the summary, the Director(s) will do a preliminary assessment of the suitability/appropriateness of the research according to the criteria and standards outlined in this policy and the appendix.
- 2.3 If the Director(s) decides that agency involvement is unwarranted, the original summary and any copies of the proposal are returned to the investigator(s) with an explanation for the decision.
- 2.4 If the Director(s) decides that agency involvement is warranted, the Director(s) requests the investigator(s) submit a Curriculum Vitae (C.V.) for the principal and associate investigators, unless the researcher's credentials are on file at the MLHU. The C.V. may be the credential sheet for the funding body or a personal data sheet that includes name, degree, relevant research experience, publications and grants.
 - 2.4.1 The Director(s) also requests a full research proposal outlining the:
 - i. Study's objective(s), summary of the literature review and a statement of the research question/hypothesis;
 - ii. Operational definition of key factors under investigation;
 - iii. Study design, sample size and the measurement instruments;
 - iv. Procedures for data collection/ processing, (computer facilities to be used) and data analysis (how the study's objective will be met);
 - v. An interpretation and application of the findings;
 - vi. Resource implications for the health unit;
 - vii. The communication of results and final authorship;
 - viii. Confirmation or status of Ethics Review if applicable.

Note: The proposal submitted to a University Research Ethics Board is acceptable for submission to RAC.

The Director(s) assesses the proposal according to the criteria and standards outlined in this policy.

A negative decision is processed as in 2.3 of this procedure.

- 2.5 The Director(s) forwards proposal(s) along with C.V.s and Ethics Review outcomes (if available) worthy of further consideration to the Chair of the RAC. The Director(s) also provides a statement explaining why the proposal warrants further consideration.
- 2.6 The RAC reviews the proposal according to the criteria and standards outlined in the Appendix A to this policy. The RAC Chair will be responsible to form a Review Panel of three reviewers and ensure that one reviewer will act as the Lead Reviewer. The Lead Reviewer will be selected from current RAC Committee Members. Only the Lead Reviewer will be identified to the Director and the researchers, and in the public record of RAC reviews. The

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Lead Reviewer is responsible to submit the collective review opinion of the Review Panel and upon request will make him or herself available to Directors or Investigators to discuss the review results.

- 2.7 The RAC Chair will keep a roster of health unit staff or appropriate external reviewers not currently sitting on RAC to aid in proposal reviews.
- 2.8 RAC is informed of the Review Panel's assessment. If there are issues regarding the proposal, the issues will be discussed at the next RAC meeting. The RAC Chair provides a written summary of the assessment to the Director. If indicated, the RAC Chair may recommend a meeting with the researcher for clarification of RAC concerns. The Director or designate may attend the RAC meeting where the review of the proposal is discussed.
- 2.9 If there is disagreement regarding ethical or methodological issues by the Director about the recommendations from the Review Panel, the Director will contact the RAC Chair and a meeting will be arranged to address the issues. In the event that outstanding concerns are not resolved, the Directors Committee makes the final decision about agency involvement in the study, after considering the written assessment from the RAC, and informs the RAC Chair. The respective Director informs the principal researcher of the final decision.
- 2.10 The RAC Chair retains a copy of the proposal summary and correspondence related to the proposal.
- 2.11 The MOH will inform the Board of Health of the proposed research as needed.
- 2.12 A negative decision is processed as in 2.3 of this procedure.

3.0 Ethics Review

All research projects are encouraged to seek ethics review and RAC may request that an ethics review be sought for projects that are submitted to RAC. The UWO research ethics board is available to provide consultations to determine if an ethics review is indicated. Proposals may be simultaneously submitted for review by RAC and a university research ethics board. Research projects do not need to have received RAC approval prior to submission for external funding however they must receive approval prior to commencing any work on the project.

- 3.1 According to the PHRED Affiliation Agreements between MLHU and UWO and between MLHU and Brescia University College, all research conducted by faculty members in the PHRED Program must be reviewed by the academic institution's research ethics board (i.e. ethics review).
- 3.2 All MLHU projects designated as research and conducted by MLHU staff with UWO faculty appointments must be considered by the University's research ethics board. The review board is available to provide consultations to determine if an ethics review is indicated.

4.0 Data Ownership

- 4.1 Data collected by staff and researchers employed by MLHU will remain the property of MLHU. Data collected by other researchers will remain the property of the principal investigator unless otherwise negotiated.

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5.0 Dissemination and Uptake of Research Findings

- 5.1 All reports/publications resulting from research conducted at MLHU by health unit staff and faculty members assigned to the PHRED Program must be forwarded to the Library. If an external investigator conducted the research, the responsible Service Area Director will ensure that the principal investigator submits one copy of the completed research report to the RAC Chair.
- 5.2 The chair of RAC forwards the copy to the MLHU library for cataloguing.
- 5.3 External researchers, faculty members assigned to the PHRED Program and MLHU staff conducting research at MLHU will be expected to disseminate findings and practice implications to program staff and managers.
- 5.4 Where possible, distribution and release of research reports will follow the presentation of the reports to the Board of Health.
- 5.5 Release of research projects to the Board of Health should not jeopardize peer-reviewed publications by faculty members assigned to the PHRED Program.
- 5.6 The researcher(s) and program staff in consultation with the Communications Manager should identify a spokesperson(s) for the research prior to the release of any reports.
- 5.7 Research conducted by UWO/ Brescia University College faculty and members assigned to the PHRED Program will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications and through other media to ensure that MLHU program staff and managers are aware of research findings and implications for public health practice.
- 5.8 To facilitate the dissemination of research findings, MLHU staff will be supported by members of the Research Education Evaluation and Development (REED) Services in preparing abstracts for conference presentations and manuscripts for publication.
- 5.9 The Director of REED Services will ensure that at least one Research & Practice Symposium is held annually to disseminate research findings and implications for public health practice.
- 5.10 The Director of REED Services will ensure that an Inventory of Research Projects is completed and presented annually to the Board of Health.

6.0 Inventory of Research Projects

An Inventory of Research Projects will be presented to the Board of Health annually. The Inventory will include research in which MLHU staff and faculty members assigned to the Public Health Research, Education & Development (PHRED) Program were either the lead investigators or collaborated with researchers from other institutions and research projects conducted by students in collaboration with MLHU.