

IRB Bulletin: October 2026

Announcements

As a part of the Northwestern University IRB Office's initiative to share timely resources and information with the research community, the IRB publishes the Bulletin at the beginning of each month, which contains relevant updates from the IRB Office. You can also find the IRB Bulletin on the [IRB News & Announcements](#) page. Please keep reading for this month's updates.

Considerations for Communicating Risk in Consent Forms

We have updated our Suggested Consent Language page with new guidance on [Considerations for Communicating Risk in Consent Forms](#). The guidance provides recommendations for presenting risk information clearly and in ways that may improve participant understanding.

Clear communication of risk is an important part of helping prospective research participants understand the potential risks and benefits of participating in research. Research suggests that participants may understand numeric descriptions of risk more readily than verbal descriptions alone, such as "rare," "unlikely," or "common."

The new guidance provides examples and practical considerations for communicating risk and probability in consent forms, including:

- Use numbers when describing probability, even when the estimate is approximate.
- Use consistent and round denominators when presenting frequencies.
- Describe absolute changes in risk rather than relative risk reductions or odds ratios.
- Provide context for unfamiliar measurements or clinical values to help participants understand what the numbers mean.
- Consider visual displays, such as icon arrays or stacked bar charts, when presenting risk graphically.

The guidance is adapted from the 2025 *JAMA* article, "[How to Communicate Medical Numbers](#)," by Zikmund-Fisher, Thorpe, and Fagerlin.

Explore the new [Considerations for Communicating Risk in Consent Forms](#) section and the full [Suggested Consent Language](#) page.

IRB Office Closure October 15 - 16 (Staff Engagement Day & IRB Member Retreat)

The IRB Office will be closed on Thursday, October 15, and Friday, October 16, for staff engagement and educational events. Staff will have limited access to email during this time.



For **time sensitive matters requiring assistance during the closure**, please contact the appropriate team member or email below:

- o **Biomedical Research:** Lucas Sikorski, lsikorski@northwestern.edu & Pranjali Patankar, p-gholkar@northwestern.edu
- o **Social Behavioral Research:** sbsirb@northwestern.edu
- o **Reliance:** irbreliance@northwestern.edu
- o **Compliance:** irbcompliance@northwestern.edu
- o **Education:** irbtraining@northwestern.edu
- o **Urgent Matters:** Marcella Cooks, m-oliver2@northwestern.edu

The IRB Office will resume normal operations on Monday, October 19. Thank you for your patience.

UPCOMING BROWN BAG

Clinical Research Coordination 101: A Practical Crash Course for Getting Started

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 | 12:00 - 1:00 PM

REGISTER HERE

Please join us virtually for our monthly Brown Bag Session featuring Priya R. Tripathi, Assistant Director, Center for Education and Career Development (CECD), Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute

Based on the NUCATS CRC Basic Training curriculum, this presentation will introduce the core responsibilities of a clinical research coordinator, with an emphasis on participant protection, regulatory compliance, and day-to-day study management.

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the role and responsibilities of a Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC) throughout the clinical research lifecycle, including study start-up, participant recruitment, study conduct, and closeout.
2. Identify key ethical and regulatory requirements for conducting clinical research, including informed consent, Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, Good Clinical Practice (GCP), HIPAA, and participant safety reporting.
3. Recognize essential clinical research coordination activities and documentation practices, including maintaining regulatory files, managing study visits and procedures, documenting adverse events, and preparing for monitoring and audits.

volunteering at her local animal shelter, and traveling with her husband to experience new cultures and perspectives. Jess combines her scientific perspective with a genuine appreciation for nature and community.



IRB Office - Contact Us

IRB Office Unit	Email/Phone	Virtual Office Hours
Biomedical Research/General	irb@northwestern.edu 312-503-9338	Monthly - Every Second Wednesday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Register
Social and Behavioral Research	sbirb@northwestern.edu 847-467-1723	Weekly - Every Wednesday 2:30 - 3:30 PM Register
Compliance	irbcompliance@northwestern.edu 312-503-1376	Appointment Available Upon Request Email Compliance
Reliance	irbreliance@northwestern.edu	Weekly - Every Tuesday 3:00 - 4:00 PM Register
Education and Communication	irbtraining@northwestern.edu	Appointment Available Upon Request Email Training/Education
eIRB+ Technical	eIRB+ Support Form	---

Please use the Northwestern University IRB Office Website as your primary source of information and resources on human research protections

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