Protocol Exception Request

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures for documenting and requesting exceptions from the IRB.

Policy

Federal regulations require that all protocol modifications (any change from the approved protocol) must be submitted to the IRB for review and receive approval prior to implementation unless the change is to eliminate an immediate harm to a research subject.

When a PI anticipates a one-time, intentional action or process that departs from the approved protocol and which the PI deems significant, they must request an exception be granted by the IRB prior to implementation.

Minor exceptions do not require prior IRB approval, but a summary or list of minor exceptions implemented should be submitted at the time of continuing review.

Procedure

Definitions

Protocol Exception	A one-time, intentional action or process that departs from the IRB-approved protocol, intended for one occurrence.
Significant Exception	A protocol exception which will or may have the potential to (at least one of the following): ▪ impact subject rights, welfare or safety of present, past or future subject(s) ▪ increase the risks and/or decrease the benefit for research subjects(s) ▪ compromise the integrity of the study data, or ▪ affect a subject's willingness to participate in the study IRB-approval is obtained prior to implementation.
Minor Exception	An exception the Investigator deems non-significant. IRB-approval not required prior to implementation, but summary of all minor exceptions should be submitted at the time of continuing

	review.
Amendment	An on-going, permanent revision or clarification to an IRB-approved protocol. IRB-approval is obtained prior to implementation.

Protocol Exception Requests and Documentation

A **protocol exception** is a one-time, temporary action or process that departs from the IRB-approved protocol, and generally intended for one specific subject.

When a protocol exception is anticipated, the PI should promptly assess the potential impact the exception may have on the rights, safety, and welfare of subjects, as well as the integrity of resultant study data.

Significant Exceptions

An exception is considered significant if it will or may have the potential to (at least one of the following):

- impact subject rights, welfare or safety of present, past or future subject(s);
- increase the risks and/or decrease the benefit for research subjects(s)
- compromise the integrity of the study data, or
- affect the subjects willingness to participate in the study

When a protocol exception is deemed Significant, the PI is required to submit a formal request to the IRB using the ***Reportable Event Form*** and receive approval prior to implementation. If there is an outside study sponsor, obtain approval for the exception request (if applicable) prior to IRB submission. PI should maintain a copy of IRB approval with corresponding request documentation as part of their study records.

Minor Exceptions

Minor Exceptions (exceptions that do not meet criteria as significant) do not need prior IRB-approval but should still be documented by the investigator as part of their own study records. A summary or list of minor exceptions should be submitted to the IRB at the time of continuing review.

It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to make an independent determination as to whether it should be classified as **significant** or **minor**. The PI may contact the IRB office for assistance with making this determination.

It is up to the PI and research staff to determine a suitable method of documentation, such as a summary log or a note to be filed in the investigator's study records. Whatever method is determined, it should include the following information:

1. Date or Time Frame the Exception will be applied
2. Description of Protocol Exception

3. Reason and Rationale for Exception
4. Explanation why action will be one-time, rather than permanent
5. PI assessment whether action is Significant, and reason for choice
6. PI signature and date

Whether significant or minor, protocol exceptions are intended to be one-time requests without the intention of amending the protocol permanently. When the same exception is requested more than once, the IRB may not grant the exception and request the investigator to submit a protocol amendment.

If a significant change is implemented without prior IRB-approval, the event must be reported to the IRB as a **Significant Protocol Deviation/Non-compliance** within 72 hours of being known, using the ***Reportable Event Form***.

If a change is implemented prior to IRB-approval to eliminate an immediate harm to a research subject, the event must be reported to the IRB within 72 hours of being known, using the **Reportable Event Form**.

Examples of Protocol Exceptions

Event	Minor	Significant
Change to a subject's visit schedule or procedures.	The study visit will be scheduled outside the procedure window to accommodate the subject's vacation but will not impact subject safety or data integrity.	Omitting a screening visit procedure/test intended to verify a diagnosis for inclusion criteria and that relies on previous medical history for diagnosis or patient self-report.
Enrolling a potential subject who does not meet inclusion/criteria.	The subject is a few months younger than minimum age requirement but otherwise meets all other criteria.	The subject will continue on medication which is an exclusion criterion under close monitoring (i.e. additional blood testing, more study visits).

Related Content

IRB Form

Reportable Event Form.

Document Attributes

Title	**Protocol Exception Request**		
Author	Susan Kornetsky	**Dates**	04/01/05

Reviewed/ Revised by	Susan Kornetsky	**Reviewed/ Revised**	06/20/05 05/04/07 09/24/08 03/19/2010 5/1/15
Copyright	©Boston Children's Hospital, 2020	**Last Modified**	2/25/2020
Approved	Susan Kornetsky, MPH Director of Clinical Research Compliance August Cervini, MBA Vice President for Research Administration		