

# OSP Newsflash



March 9, 2020

## Information on COVID-19 and Research

In light of the increasing concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, we wanted to call your attention to the following:

- NSF released the following FAQs related to COVID-19 on March 4: <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2020/nsf20053/nsf20053.jsp>
- NSF released a Dear Colleague Letter on March 4 inviting research proposals to better understand and model the spread of COVID-19: <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2020/nsf20052/nsf20052.jsp>
- NIH's policy on late proposal applications can be found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/faqs#/late-application-submission-policy.htm>
- For project supported travel that has been disrupted due to travel restrictions, please contact [researchadmin@yale.edu](mailto:researchadmin@yale.edu). These situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine allowability of being charged to the sponsored project. OSP expects guidance from the federal funding agencies regarding this issue and others, so answers may not be immediately available.
- OSP will continue normal operations unless the university issues guidance directing otherwise.
- On March 5, Provost Strobel sent the following message to all faculty and Lead Administrators:

Yale

Office of the Provost

March 5, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Yale University continues to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19. With the ongoing concern about the spread of this disease, laboratories and research facilities should begin to plan for the possibility of a significant disruption to normal operations.

Each laboratory or research facility is best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet their unique needs. The guidance below is provided to facilitate the development of that plan. (Information related to personal prevention and health planning may be found at <https://communications.yale.edu/covid-19-information#precautions>.)

### Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities

**Assumptions that you can use for planning, based on a scenario with widespread COVID-19 communal transmission:**

- A significant percentage of your laboratory workforce may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.

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- The Yale Animal Resources Center and Environmental Health & Safety will maintain critical functions.
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be available.
- Repairs performed by Facilities and other Yale and non-Yale service providers may be delayed.
- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.
- The university will communicate any disruptions to laboratory access.

**Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:**

- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
  - Ensure staff have the appropriate training.
  - Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).
- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your EHS Safety Advisors, business offices, and other key administrative units.

**Measures you can take to prevent the spread of illness among your group if the risk of COVID-19 increases within the Yale community:**

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing in the laboratory.
- Disinfect common laboratory areas and touch points with 70% ethanol (e.g. doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, telephones).
- Remind staff to stay home when they are not feeling well.
- Consider alternating work schedules to meet the demands of the laboratory while limiting close contact with others.
- Identify work that can be done from home or remotely, such as data analysis.
  - Test and update remote work technologies such as VPN and Zoom conferencing.
    - Note: VPN access may be limited, and you may need to prioritize access for your group.
- Avoid in-person meetings. Use remote work technologies such as Zoom conferencing.

**Other safety considerations:**

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise maximum caution.
- Notify colleagues of your schedule when working alone for an extended period of time.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured.

**Grant related questions:**

- The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) is reviewing questions relating to the allowability of costs associated with any disruptions to sponsored projects stemming from the coronavirus.
  - Send questions to departmental business offices who should coordinate with OSP.
  - In order for a cost to be allowable, it will require consistent treatment across all funding sources.
  - The federal funding agencies are working on a unified message in this regard. Once it is published, OSP will share it with the Yale community.

## Next Steps:

Although there are no known cases of COVID-19 infection at Yale or in Connecticut, the university is following guidance from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, CDC, and other agencies, and coordinating closely with the City of New Haven. The individuals involved in planning the university's response have worked in consultation with experts from the Yale School of Public Health and School of Medicine to update the university's existing pandemic response plan in the event of widespread U.S. community transmission of COVID-19 or announcement of a COVID-19 pandemic. Our latest notice states that if any of these scenarios occur, the Yale community will be notified via email and through the Yale ALERT system, and the main Yale webpage will include a banner with a link to the university status and action plan. The Yale Coronavirus COVID-19 website will be updated as new information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Scott Strobel

Provost

Henry Ford II Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry

Professor of Chemistry

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Yale University