

University of Texas at Austin
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

IACUC Policy # 3.0

TITLE	Occupational Health Program Information and Enrollment		
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3.0.1 Laboratory Animal and Biomedical Services (OHP-LABS)

The health and safety of individuals working in animal care and use programs is an area of institutional concern requiring commitment from the senior officials of the institution. The goal of the OHP-LABS is to prevent occupational injury and illness by avoiding, controlling or eliminating hazards in the workplace. The emphasis of such a program is the prevention of illness and injury, but it also includes provisions for early diagnosis and treatment when necessary.

3.0.2 The IACUC's Responsibility for Occupational Health and Safety

The PHS Policy places responsibility for ensuring a safe working environment for personnel involved in the animal care and use program with the institution. An effective Occupational Health Program works with many separate institutional components including animal care and use, research, environmental health and safety, occupational health, and administration and management. A natural point of convergence for these functionally distinct institutional elements at many institutions is the IACUC. Assurance of a safe working environment is one of the topics the IACUC should consider in each animal use proposal and as part of the semiannual program evaluation. It is generally necessary to involve health and safety specialists in the design and implementation of the IACUC review guidelines.

3.0.3 Role of the IACUC in the Occupational Health Program

Procedures should be developed for conducting a health and safety review of research activities that present hazards. These procedures should be incorporated into the IACUC protocol review process. Procedures to identify and address non-experimental hazards (e.g., during semiannual facility inspections and program reviews) should also be implemented. Communication and other procedural links between the IACUC and the environmental health and safety professional or office should be established, maintained and documented. The IACUC has a role in ensuring that personnel comply with health and safety requirements (e.g., ensuring personnel have received appropriate training, evaluating compliance with standard operating procedures or institutional policy during semiannual facility inspections, etc.).

3.0.4 Elements of the Occupational Health Program

An effective program design requires input from health and safety specialists and will include the following elements:

- Administrative procedures,
- Facility design and operation,
- Risk assessment,
- Exposure control,
- Education and training,

- Occupational healthcare services,
- Personal protective equipment,
- Equipment performance,
- Information management,
- Emergency procedures, and
- Program evaluation.

The details of each element will be dictated by the extent and nature of employees' exposure and the type of animal use program.

3.0.5 Participation in the Occupational Health Program

A wide range of personnel (e.g., animal care staff, investigators, technical staff, students, volunteers, engineers, housekeepers, security officers, and maintenance personnel who care for or use animals, their tissues or fluids, or who may be exposed to them as a consequence of their job) should be provided the opportunity to participate in the OHP-LABS.

The extent and level of participation of personnel in the OHP-LABS should be based on risk assessment, including:

- hazards posed by the animals and materials used;
- exposure intensity, duration, and frequency;
- susceptibility of personnel; and
- history of occupational illness and injury in the workplace.

Health and safety specialists should be involved in the assessment of risks associated with hazardous activities. At The University of Texas at Austin, the OHP-LABS helps to protect the health and safety of faculty, students and staff who work with vertebrate animal species in the course of their research. The program is designed to customize the participation requirements based on the type and degree of exposure to animals. A set of questionnaires (an initial health risk assessment, a baseline health assessment and one for periodic updates) is used to assess this degree of risk.

Persons exposed to animals in a laboratory or vivarium environment or to fresh (unfixed) animal tissues must complete the health risk assessment questionnaire. The completion of a baseline health assessment questionnaire is encouraged to provide additional details that can assist in offering targeted health risk counseling to program participants. The questionnaire(s) are submitted to the Occupational Health Nurse. After turning in the form, the individual will be considered "enrolled" in the OHP-LABS, which satisfies initial IACUC requirements for being placed on a protocol.

The Occupational Health Nurse will evaluate the risks and review the person's health information and vaccination status provided on the health risk questionnaire, and if submitted, the baseline health assessment questionnaire. The individual may be contacted to clarify certain items. Once the questionnaire(s) has been reviewed, the person is considered to be "participating" in the OHP-LABS, unless they specifically sign a declination statement.

If the Occupational Health Nurse determines that there is a particular reason for a follow-up screening appointment, one will be arranged. An example of this would be in the case of reported animal allergy symptoms or other potentially work-related health problems associated with animals. If there is no need

for a direct visit, the Occupational Health Nurse will make note of any follow-up items, such as a recommended tetanus booster or an annually required tuberculosis (TB) screening test, and will coordinate arrangements to provide such services.

If for any reason the individual would like to meet with the Occupational Health Nurse, regardless of the risk analysis, there is a section of the questionnaire that allows for that to be requested.

3.0.6 Occupational Health Program Education and Training

There are ethical and legal requirements to inform individuals of workplace health risks that could potentially affect them and appropriate precautions to mitigate those risks. The objectives of the University's OHP-LABS can be achieved only if employees are appropriately trained and understand the hazards associated with their work area and job duties, and how those risks are mitigated through institutional policies, engineering controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment.

Training should include information about:

- Zoonoses,
- Chemical safety,
- Microbiologic and physical hazards (e.g., allergens and radiation),
- Hazards associated with experimental procedures,
- Handling of waste materials, and
- Personal hygiene.

Training on the above items is provided via the "3198: Orientation" module and in each of the species-specific training modules in the AALAS Learning Library.

3.0.7 Enrollment in the Occupational Health Program

Initial Enrollment

Persons exposed to animals in a laboratory or vivarium environment or to fresh (unfixed) animal tissues must complete the [OHP health risk assessment questionnaire](#) through the *HealthPoint* Occupational Health Program known as OHP-LABS. The completion of a baseline health assessment questionnaire provides details that can assist in offering targeted health risk counseling to program participants. The questionnaire(s) are submitted to the Occupational Health Nurse. After submitting form, the individual will be considered "enrolled" in the OHP-LABS program, which satisfies initial IACUC occupational health and safety requirements for being placed on a protocol. Once the questionnaire(s) has been reviewed, the person is considered to be "participating" in the OHP-LABS. Participants may receive follow-up from the program in terms of vaccinations, information, and other services specific to their particular work and situation.

To maintain confidentiality of health information only OHP-LABS staff will have access to the information, and the form should only be submitted in person or via fax: 512-471-2666

The health assessment questionnaire will be reviewed by OHP-LABS staff, after which you may be contacted to discuss additional recommendations with the nurse.

Recurring Enrollment

After initial enrollment, reoccurring enrollment via the [OHP Update Questionnaire](#) will be required periodically to maintain IACUC approval. The frequency will depend on the assessed risk identified during previous enrollment.

- *Annually* for persons enrolled in OHP-Labs high risk categories.
- *Every three (3) years* for persons enrolled in OHP-Labs low risk categories.