

National Center for Deaf Health Research

Policy on Assuring Cross-Cultural Research Competencies Among NCDHR and Collaborating Investigators and Research Staff

Scope:

This policy applies to all investigators wishing to collaborate with, gain the endorsement of, or use resources of the NCDHR in the development of grant applications or the conduct of research projects involving the recruitment of Deaf or hard-of-hearing subjects. The motivation for this policy is described in Attachment A.

Definitions:

NCDHR Cross-Cultural Research Training Curriculum (CCRTC): The NCDHR CCRTC is a training curriculum on cross-cultural methodological and ethical principles and practices in research involving Deaf and hard-of-hearing subjects.

Investigator: For the purposes of this policy, an Investigator is an individual who wishes to conduct a research project that may involve the recruitment of Deaf or hard-of-hearing subjects, and who wishes to have the endorsement of the NCDHR, to collaborate with the NCDHR, or to use NCDHR resources.

Responsibilities:

- The Executive Committee is responsible for drafting and maintaining this policy.
- The Education/Training Subcommittee will be responsible for administering the NCDHR CCRTC, documenting the involvement of participants and their level of achievement or compliance.
- Investigators are responsible for arranging for participation in the NCDHR CCRTC and for contacting the Research Subcommittee regarding their research plans.
- The Research Subcommittee is responsible for reviewing an investigator's proposed research and make recommendations regarding the investigator's permission to collaborate with, use the resources of, or have the endorsement of the NCDHR.

Process:

1. All personnel with key roles in active NCDHR research projects or projects proposed for NCDHR collaboration or endorsement (including Investigators, co-investigators, research assistants and others) will participate in the NCDHR Cross-Cultural Research Training Curriculum and attain satisfactory compliance with the principles taught or achievement in the knowledge transmitted.
2. Any inquiry from potential Investigators regarding matters addressed in the policy should be referred to the Research Subcommittee.
3. The Research Subcommittee will inform potential Investigators of this policy.
4. The Research Subcommittee will review the proposed research project for cross-cultural methodologic and ethical appropriateness. This review will include consideration of the knowledge and abilities of the researchers involved.
5. Studies deemed acceptable for collaboration or endorsement by the Research Subcommittee will be presented to the Deaf Health Community Committee, or another NCDHR community committee if appropriate, for its review and approval.
6. Only studies that have been approved at these two levels may proceed with the collaboration of the NCDHR or its endorsement.

7. The Research Subcommittee will report to the Evaluation Committee on a periodic basis, at least annually, regarding the activities undertaken in accordance with this policy.
8. The Research and Education/Training Subcommittees will review the CCRTC on an annual basis and update as necessary and appropriate.

Precedents:

Applicable Date:

This policy went into effect on October 3, 2005.

Revision History:

- 1.

Attachment A

Research involving the deaf population is, quite often, cross-cultural in nature¹ and thus associated with complexities and risks that are unique to cross-cultural investigation. Among these are risks of invalid research methods and findings, risks to individual research participants, risks to the “host community” as a whole, and risks to the viability of conducting future research with the host community if these complexities and risks are not adequately understood and addressed. While the complexities, risks, and ethical tenets of conducting cross-cultural research with (hearing) individuals from other language and cultural populations have been well-documented,² there is little professional literature and therefore awareness among researchers about how these topics apply to research with the deaf population.³ In that regard, there is a high likelihood that researchers interested in collaborating with the NCDHR, and non-collaborating researchers who nevertheless become interested in the deaf population as a result of learning of the NCDHR’s activities, will be inadequately prepared to conduct valid and ethical research with this population. The NCDHR has an obligation to foster the cross-cultural education of these researchers, for their own benefit and because it will yield more useful and valid research results that ultimately will benefit the deaf and hard-of-hearing population. Further, the NCDHR has an obligation to minimize or prevent improperly designed or conducted research from harming the host community with whom we are engaged in this cross-cultural, community-participatory endeavor. Finally, the viability of the NCDHR depends on maintaining an effective relationship with our host community which can be speedily and irreparably damaged if NCDHR actually or by perception is associated with improper cross-cultural research actions. In light of these obligations, NCDHR is committed to (1) generating, teaching, and disseminating knowledge regarding cross-cultural methodological and ethical principles and practices in deafness research, (2) adhering to such principles and practices, and (3) assuring that our own staff and all research collaborators learn and adhere to these principles and practices.

¹ Pollard, R. Q (1992). Cross-cultural ethics in the conduct of deafness research. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 37(2), 87-101.

² Sartorius, N. (1988). Experience from the mental health programme of the World Health Organization. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 344[Supplementum], 71-74.

Tapp, J. L., Kelman, H. C., Triandis, H. C., Wrightsman, L. S., & Coelho, G. V. (1974). Continuing concerns in cross-cultural ethics: A report. *International Journal of Psychology*, 9 (3), 231-249.

Trimble, J. E. (1988). Putting the ethic to work: Applying social psychological principles in cross-cultural settings. In M. Bond (Ed.), *The cross-cultural challenge to social psychology* (pp. 109-212). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

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³ Pollard, R. Q (2002). Ethical conduct in research involving deaf people. In V. A. Gutman (Ed.), *Ethics in mental health and deafness* (pp. 162-178). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.