

## **The ABC's of the IRB Process for Student Investigators**

Going through the IRB review process can be scary and confusing. Student researchers may ask questions such as: “Do I need to submit my project to the IRB? How do I submit to the IRB? Where do I start? How long does it take to get IRB approval? Will I be able to graduate on time? Who can help me with my application?” If these questions sound familiar, you’ve come to the right place. This section of the website can provide some answers to questions you may have regarding the IRB process.

### **A – Setting up an iStar Account**

Students must obtain an iStar account prior to beginning the IRB process. iStar is the online IRB application system (<http://istar-chla.usc.edu>). To obtain an iStar user account, students can send an email request to [istar@usc.edu](mailto:istar@usc.edu) with their name, email address, campus, and department/division.

### **B – CITI – Online Human Subjects Education**

Students who are conducting studies that do not qualify as human subjects research are not required to complete the CITI education course. Students can contact the IRB ([upirb@usc.edu](mailto:upirb@usc.edu)), the IRB student mentor ([irbgara@usc.edu](mailto:irbgara@usc.edu)), the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects ([oprs@usc.edu](mailto:oprs@usc.edu)) or check the IRB website if they are unsure if their study qualifies as human subjects research.

Once students receive their iStar account, they must complete the required online CITI human subjects education training course. This education course is a requirement for all investigators and personnel involved in human subjects research. Students can work on their iStar application without CITI certification; however they may not submit the application to the IRB unless they have completed the CITI training. [Click here](#) for detailed information on CITI.

### **C – Does Your Study Qualify as Human Subjects Research According to Federal Definitions?**

Studies that do not meet the federal definitions of human subjects research do not have to be reviewed and approved by the IRB. Student investigators who are unsure if their proposed study qualifies as Human Subjects Research can find more information in the [Is Your Project Human Subjects Research?](#) booklet. This booklet explains the federal definitions of what qualifies as “research” and “human subjects.” It also contains examples of studies that qualify as human subjects research and those that do not. Student investigators can also contact their faculty advisor, the IRB office ([upirb@usc.edu](mailto:upirb@usc.edu)), the IRB Student Mentor ([irbgara@usc.edu](mailto:irbgara@usc.edu)), or the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects ([oprs@usc.edu](mailto:oprs@usc.edu)) for further assistance.

### **D – Your Study Qualifies as Human Subjects Research...Now What?**

Student investigators can go into their iStar account and start their IRB application by clicking “New Study.” Students are advised to consult with their faculty advisor regarding this process.

## **E – Need Assistance?**

Students can find information about the IRB process through their faculty advisor. Other resources can be found in the [Student Investigator’s Guide to the IRB Process and Human Subjects Research](#) handbook found in the IRB website, the IRB office, research departments within the student’s school/program (if available), and/or the IRB Student Mentor. (An IRB Student Mentor is available to assist student investigators with the IRB process. The Student Mentor can be reached at [irbgara@usc.edu](mailto:irbgara@usc.edu).)

## **F – Which IRB Application do I Need?**

Please review the following chart to find out which application to complete:

<b>If Your Research Project...</b>	<b>Then...</b>
Is Human Subjects Research	Investigators must complete the “New Study Application” by going into their iStar account. ( <a href="https://istar-chla.usc.edu">https://istar-chla.usc.edu</a> ) More information about each question can be found by going into the <a href="#">Study Application Guidance</a> in the Training Resources section of the iStar website or through the <a href="#">Student Investigator’s Guide to the IRB Process and Human Subjects Research</a> handbook found in the IRB website.
Is NOT Human Subjects Research	Investigators must complete the Human Subjects Determination Request Application in iStar. ( <a href="https://istar-chla.usc.edu">https://istar-chla.usc.edu</a> ) Investigators who are unsure if their proposed study qualifies as Human Subjects Research can find more information in the <a href="#">Is Your Project Human Subjects Research?</a> booklet.
Analyzes Coded Data (Secondary Data) Only	Investigators must complete the Human Subjects Determination Request Application in iStar. ( <a href="https://istar-chla.usc.edu">https://istar-chla.usc.edu</a> ) Investigators who are unsure if their proposed study qualifies as Coded Data can find more information in the <a href="#">Is Your Project Human Subjects Research?</a> booklet.
Analyzes Biological Specimens Only	Investigators must complete the Human Subjects Determination Request Application in iStar. ( <a href="https://istar-chla.usc.edu">https://istar-chla.usc.edu</a> ) Investigators who are unsure if their proposed study qualifies as Coded Biological Specimens can find more information in the <a href="#">Is Your Project Human Subjects Research?</a> booklet.