

The Howard University Occupational Health and Safety Program

The Howard University Occupational Health and Safety Program (HU-OHSP) provides occupational health, preventive medicine, health surveillance, and safety training for University and Howard University personnel. The HU OHSP is a shared responsibility among several units; including Howard University Department of Employee Health (EH), the Office of Regulatory Research Compliance (ORRC), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S).

The Department of Employee Health administers the Occupational Health and Safety Program for HU's Animal Care and Use Program. Personnel identified under this category include those involved in the direct or indirect animal contact. Personnel with direct contact, and recognized as having the highest risk of exposure to hazards associated with such contact, include veterinary care/husbandry staff (e.g., animal care technicians, and attending and back-up veterinarians) and animal users (researchers and other personnel engaged in the use of animals or animal fluids and tissues in research, teaching or learning, and testing; e.g., graduate students, professional students, and undergraduate students, etc). Personnel with indirect animal contact, and with a lower but acknowledged risk of exposure to animal-related hazards, include housekeeping and sanitation control staff and physical facility support personnel who may come into contact with animal-contaminated materials or surfaces. In this context, HU-OHSP carries out an initial individual risk assessment for personnel with direct contact (PDC). Personnel in this category receive initial and follow up health assessment; preventive medical care and consultation (based on risk assessment and health status); and the HU-OHSP is poised to address potential or actual exposure and accidents on an individual basis. Individual components of the program are as follows:

Risk Assessment by EH nurse is performed for each person enrolled in the OHSP on an annual basis. This assessment is based on information provided in the questionnaire to evaluate the physical risks, work processes and hazardous materials related to the work and the environment in which the work is being conducted.

Initial physical examinations are required for those who fall in the “High Risk” category, or as directed by the Employee Health as a condition for medical clearance to work in the Vivarium or other campus workspaces where animal use/exposure occurs.

Medical health surveillance also includes provisions for any required immunizations (e.g., Tetanus prophylaxis). Exposure to hazardous materials such as carcinogens, highly toxic chemicals or other items which could create health concerns may necessitate additional medical surveillance requirements.

Based on its collective risk assessment and hazards knowledge base for PDC, HU-OHSP is able to address the hazards and related exposure risk for those with indirect contact, and provide medical care and related support on a case by case basis.

The site-specific safety assessment, safety training and incident response component of the overall program is carried out by EH&S, under the auspices of the ORRC. All HU personnel are required to complete an on-line safety training addressing but not limited to use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, shoe coverings, lab coats, masks and N95 respirators, etc.

The IACUC assesses each and every animal use protocol for potential hazards, exposure risk and exposure minimization and prevention and refer applicable protocols to the Institutional Biosafety Committee or the Office of Radiation Safety prior to protocol approval. As well, those, personnel with direct animal contact are affirmed to have undergone risk assessment and to have obtained clearance from the HU-OHSP. Hairnets or any combination of these is an absolute requirement when working in procedural/animal holding areas of the Vivarium and in laboratories where live animals are temporarily used or animal tissues/fluids may be handled. These safeguards are an integral part of the occupational health and safety program for Animal Care and Use.

ORRC administrative practices and Standard Operating Procedures implemented upon receipt of an IACUC protocol (and prior to protocol review) are as follows:

- Protocol submitters must complete and submit to EH *the Medical History and Risk Assessment Questionnaire for Persons Handling or Working with Vertebrate Animals*.
- If applicable, protocol submitters must respond promptly to communications from EH regarding completeness of information or scheduling medical services (e.g., physical exam, tetanus immunization) or other related queries necessary to receive occupational health program approval to handle and/or work with animals; and
- No protocol submitter or staff seeking approval to carry out animal use procedures may do so prior to HU-OHSP approval.

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For appointments:

HU/HUH Faculty & Staff
Employee Health

HU Students
TBD

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