

CUH IRB IRB Guidance on Letters of Support / Site Permission

Purpose of This Guidance

Many research studies conducted by Chaminade students, faculty, and staff involve recruitment or data collection at organizations outside of CUH. When an external site is directly involved in the research activities, the Chaminade IRB may require a Letter of Support (also called a Letter of Cooperation or Site Permission Letter).

This document explains:

- When a Letter of Support is required
- When it is not needed
- What the letter must include
- How to obtain one
- Examples of acceptable formats

What is a Letter of Support?

A **Letter of Support** is written documentation from an authorized official at an external organization indicating:

- They are aware of the research study
- They understand what activities will take place at their site or with their population
- They grant permission for the research to occur as described
- The plan is appropriate and feasible for their setting



A Letter of Support is not the same as IRB approval. It is documentation of permission **from the external site**, whereas the Chaminade IRB grants approval for the study itself.

When Does Chaminade's IRB Require a Letter of Support?

A Letter of Support **IS required** when:

✓ Research activities will occur on-site at an external organization

Examples:

- Conducting interviews, focus groups, classroom observations
- Using office space or facilities at the site
- Collecting data from staff, clients, students, or members

✓ The site is directly helping with recruitment or screening

Examples:

- Staff distributing recruitment emails or materials internally
- Site administrators helping identify eligible participants
- Staff assisting with scheduling or posting announcements in restricted spaces

✓ The site is granting access to private, protected, or non-public settings

Such as:

- Schools and school districts
- Clinics, counseling centers, medical offices
- Nonprofits, social service agencies, or private companies
- Government programs or facilities
- Religious organizations
- Closed social media groups

A Letter of Support **IS NOT required** when:

✓ Recruitment is passive and public

- Posting flyers in publicly accessible locations
- Sharing IRB-approved announcements on public boards, public websites, social media, etc.
- Providing recruitment materials to an organization only for public posting (no staff involvement)

✓ No external staff or resources are involved

✓ The site itself does not require formal permission

If an organization is only allowing passive circulation of flyers or announcements, a Letter of Support is generally not required.

Who Can Provide a Letter of Support?

The letter must come from an individual who has the **authority** to allow research at that site.

Examples:

- School principal or district administrator
- Program or clinic director
- Executive director or manager at a nonprofit
- HR representative or department head
- Government program administrator



The letter cannot come from the PI, co-investigator, or anyone on the research team, nor someone with a conflict of interest.

What Must a Letter of Support Include?

An acceptable Letter of Support must include:

Required Elements

- Name, title, organization, and contact information of the authorized official
- Reference to the CUH research project (title or brief description)
- Acknowledgment that the site is aware of the study
- Description of what the researcher will do at the site
- Confirmation that the activities and recruitment approach are appropriate for the setting
- Statement granting permission to conduct the research activities described
- Any conditions, restrictions, or requirements (if applicable)
- Signature on organizational letterhead OR an email from an official institutional email account



Acceptable Formats

Chaminade IRB accepts:

- ✓ **Signed letter on organizational letterhead**
- ✓ **Email approval from an official organizational email account**

(As long as contact information is included.)

The letter must be **traceable** to the official who granted permission. Letterhead or official email is standard.



When Must the Letter Be Obtained?

- Letters must be obtained **before any research interaction begins** at that site.
- The letter may be **required before IRB approval**, depending on the study.
- For some exempt studies, the IRB may review the protocol without the letter, but **research cannot begin until the letter is obtained** and retained by the researcher.



Researchers must upload the letter into eProtocol **if the IRB requests it** and must always retain a copy in their research file.

Responsibilities

Principal Investigator

- Determine whether a Letter of Support is required
- Explain the study and access needed to the external site
- Obtain the letter from the authorized official
- Upload to eProtocol if required
- Retain documentation with study records
- Ensure no research begins before IRB approval

External Site

- Review the proposed activities
- Confirm understanding and willingness to support the research
- Provide approval on letterhead or via official email
- Communicate any site-specific requirements

Quick Decision CHECKLIST

A Letter of Support is likely required if:

- ✓ You will conduct research inside an external organization
 - ✓ External staff will help with recruitment
- ✓ You need access to non-public populations, data, or spaces
 - ✓ The site requires administrative approval

A Letter of Support is likely **not** required if:

- ✓ The site only allows public passive recruitment (flyers, posters, public announcements)
- ✓ No staff assistance or site resources are involved

Sample Language for Letters of Support

Sample Letter of Support / Site Permission:

(Use on organization letterhead)

[Date]

Chaminade University of Honolulu
Institutional Review Board
irb@chaminade.edu

RE: **Letter of Support for “[Project Title]”**

Dear Chaminade University IRB,

This letter confirms that **[Organization Name]** is aware of and supports the research study titled **“[Project Title]”**, conducted by **[Researcher Name]** from Chaminade University of Honolulu.

We grant permission for the researcher to carry out the following activities at our organization:

[Recruit participants / distribute flyers / conduct interviews / administer surveys / observe sessions / etc.]

We understand the study purpose, proposed activities, and any resource requests, and agree that the research is appropriate for our setting. We acknowledge that participation by individuals is voluntary and that the Chaminade IRB oversees all human subjects protections.

If additional information is needed, please contact **[Name, Title]** at **[Phone]** or **[Email]**.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title]

[Organization Name]

[Signature, if required]



Questions?

Please contact the IRB for additional information at irb@chaminade.edu.