



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

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1. PURPOSE OF ToR

The purpose of the Terms of Reference (ToR) is to determine the mandate, decision making powers, responsibilities and mechanism for reporting of the Department of Correctional Services Research Ethics Committee (hereafter referred to “ DCS REC”).

2. BACKGROUND

The essential function of the DCS REC is to review all proposed research projects involving human participants and records review in the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). The purpose of ethics review is to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all human participants, especially the offenders, in all research projects conducted in the Department of Correctional Services. The DCS REC will achieve this through independent, prospective and ongoing ethics review of all research studies conducted by the DCS staff members and external applicants. Research to be reviewed will be in accordance to the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003).

The DCS REC will draw ethics guidance on the Department of Health (2015) Ethics in health research: Principles, structures and processes; Council for Internal Organisations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) (2015); Belmont Report and Declaration of Helsinki.

3. ROLE OF THE DCS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

REC takes responsibility for making decisions on research applications that have been submitted by DCS staff, external researchers and students. The DCS REC is responsible for the following:

- Ascertain the enforcement of the ethical considerations on all research activities within the Department of Correctional Services in accordance with the ethical standards of research or health related research activities.
- Ensure that research is activities conducted are in line with research priorities of the Department of Correctional Services.
- Identify and manage research priorities
- Identify gaps in the Department for research by re-defining research priorities.
- Ensure that research proposals stand up to scientific and ethical scrutiny
- Review the maintenance of ethical and scientific standards to:

- Protect participants from harm by weighing the risk of harm against the likelihood of benefit;
- Hold researchers accountable for their research activities;
- Promote the highest scientific standards and best available techniques or approaches for optimal use of participating humans;
- Promote important social and ethical values
- Ensure that there are no conflict of interest when making decisions
- Review research proposals prospectively to ensure that they meet the accepted ethical norms and standards before research commences.
- Liaise with other research institutions with research capabilities
- Provide guidance to researchers where it is considered that the documentation submitted is insufficient for the committee to make an informed decision.
- Provide annual reports on research activities to the National Commissioner.

4. PROCEDURE(S)

4.1 Formal character of the REC

The DCS REC must always be a NHREC registered REC and approved by the National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services.

4.2 Code of conduct for REC members

Each REC member will be required to sign the DCS REC Code of Conduct and therefore will be expected to:

- To serve as a reviewer of all research discussed at meetings;
- Agree to a term of office of three years;
- Attend research ethics training to ensure they are well informed of research ethics principles on an ongoing basis;
- Regularly attend REC meeting, at least half of the scheduled meetings for a year;
- Be punctual in the attendance of REC meetings;
- Keeping all matters discussed during REC meetings confidential;
- Always act with integrity;
- Disclose conflict of interest including any personal involvement or participation in the research.

4.3 Regulatory Framework

The DCS REC will function in accordance to the Section 73 of the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003) which mandates every institution, health agency and health establishment at which health or health-related research is conducted to establish or have access to a research ethics committee registered with and accredited by the National Health Research Ethics Council.

The DCS REC will also operate within the research ethics regulatory framework and policies of the Government of South Africa such as the National Department of Health (2015) Ethics in Health Research: Principles, structures and processes, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) as well as the Correctional Services Act, (Act No. 111 of 1998).

4.4 Reporting by REC

The DCS REC is required to prepare and submit annual reports to the National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services and to the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) in February each year reflecting on the REC activities of the financial year.

4.5 Powers of the REC

The REC has the authority to:

- Approve or reject research proposals on behalf of the Department of Correctional Services-that means that the DCS REC is the only Committee with such powers.
- Approve or reject research proposals that involve any direct testing on offenders-that is research that involves clinical trials.
- Approve research proposals that are in line with the Research Policy, Research Strategy, and Research Protocols of the Department of Correctional Services.
- Intervene if the researchers are not adhering to the Research Policy and standards of the Department of Correctional Services.
- Initiate research proposals based on priority research areas.