

Section 5 – Employee Occupational Health Program

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A. OVERVIEW

The UW's [Administrative Occupational Health Policy Statement APS 10.6](#) specifies that all employees must be provided with a safe and healthful work environment. Health assessments and occupational health recommendations are required for specific work assignments based on the types of hazards including biohazards that are present in the work environment.

The Occupational Health Program aims to accomplish the following:

1. Conform to occupational health standards set by regulatory agencies and granting and accrediting bodies including Washington State’s Department of Safety and Health (DOSH), the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC), the *NIH Guidelines*, and the CDC, including the NIH/CDC’s *BMBL* publication;
2. Assure that employees are physically able to perform their jobs;
3. Prevent and detect disease and illness resulting from exposure to possible health hazards in the work environment;
4. Establish occupational health guidelines for vaccinations, medical surveillance, and exposure response; and
5. Establish baseline health data for future comparison.

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Environmental Health and Safety

EH&S is responsible for assisting the PI with risk assessments, identifying exposure controls, and developing guidance for and assisting with the implementation of medical management protocols. The goal is to prevent occupational disease or illness resulting from exposure to



health hazards in the work environment. The role of EH&S in the process of implementing the occupational health program includes the following:

1. Provide occupational health reviews and make recommendations based on a hazard/risk assessment by the OHN, incorporating reviews from others such as EH&S specialists (biosafety, chemical hygiene, etc.), the IBC, and the UW EHC;
2. Provide follow-up for accident/injury investigation;
3. Review and ensure workplace compliance with the BBP program and all other components of the occupational health program;
4. Collaborate with the UW EHC to develop medical guidance and facilitate clinical services and care; and
5. Collaborate with Human Resources to establish safe and appropriate work assignments in keeping with current legislation.

2. Principal Investigators

PIs whose research involves the use of biohazards are responsible for communicating workplace hazards to laboratory staff and ensuring that occupational health and safety requirements are followed. In addition, PIs must offer appropriate immunizations and/or medical surveillance as specified by EH&S. All of the following actions are necessary to fulfill these responsibilities:

1. Inform both male and female employees about the reproductive and teratogenic risks when there is a potential for exposure to infectious agents in the work area. Also inform staff about the online document [EH&S Guidance About Workplace Hazards Impacting Reproduction and Development](#);
2. Inform employees about immunologic risks when there is a potential for exposure to biohazardous agents in the work area;
3. Inform employees about the possible risks associated with work using viruses that contain oncogenes or that may be oncogenic;
4. Inform staff that if they have questions or concerns about their health in relation to work with biohazardous agents, they are strongly encouraged to contact the UW EHC for a confidential medical consultation;

* Note the two UW EHC locations are at Harborview: 206-744-3081 and Hall Health for all other UW campus employees: 206-685-1026

5. Instruct employees that they must contact the UW EHC if they develop signs or symptoms consistent with exposure to the biohazardous agents in use. If employees see their personal health care provider (HCP) with symptoms, they should inform the HCP of the agents they are working with or to which they may have been exposed. They must inform the UW EHC after being treated by their HCP;
6. Instruct employees that if they have allergies that may limit the administration of specified immunizations or contraindicate prophylactic measures needed after an exposure incident, they must contact the UW EHC for evaluation. These employees may have an increased risk for infection when working in an environment where biohazards are in use.
7. Maintain records for each employee documenting the requirements to work in the laboratory. These records should be available for review by EH&S. At a minimum these records should address the following for each job classification or position:

- 1) Specific biohazard and/or exposure risk;
- 2) Required medical evaluations, including documentation of an assessment with the UW EHC;
- 3) Recommended surveillance testing;
- 4) Required or recommended immunizations, documenting the date offered and frequency of administration;
- 5) Any applicable physical requirements
- 6) Recommended serum banking and/or monitoring, documenting the frequency and date offered.
- 7) Instruct employees about procedures to follow in case of exposure to a hazardous agent. Ensure that the UW exposure response procedure information is available to staff and that the procedures are followed.
- 8) Instruct employees to report exposure incidents and near misses within 24 hours (eight hours if hospitalized or injury is serious) on the UW Online Accident Reporting System (OARS).

3. Employees

Employees engaged in activities involving biohazards are responsible for complying with the occupational health requirements and guidelines as specified by their PIs and EH&S.

Employees should be aware of the hazards in their workplace and able to bring concerns or suggestions for improvement to the attention of their supervisors.

- Employees should be aware of how their health status may be impacted by work with biohazardous agents. For example, immunocompromised individuals may be at increased risk of illness or may experience more severe illness should an exposure incident occur when working with certain biohazardous agents.

An immunocompromised status may result from immunosuppressive therapy (chronic steroid use, chemotherapy for cancer, immune modulators, radiation therapy, and others), diabetes mellitus, cancer, malnutrition, pregnancy, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and chronic alcoholism.

- If personal health concerns or questions arise, employees are strongly urged to arrange for a confidential medical consultation by contacting the UW EHC.
- The UW EHC is to be contacted for medical guidance after completing first aid procedures if a possible exposure occurs. UW employees working at non-UW facilities should contact the EHC at their location (for example, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle Children's Hospital, or the Veterans' Administration Medical Center) or go to the nearest emergency department. The UW EHC should then be notified of the exposure.

4. UW Employee Health Centers

The UW EHC is responsible for providing clinical services, including medical evaluations as needed for specific work, administering immunizations, providing follow-up care after an injury, providing employee counseling, and establishing and maintaining employee medical records. UW [Employee Health Centers](#) are located at Hall Health Center, UW Medical Center (UWMC), and Harborview Medical Center (HMC).



C. IMMUNIZATION GUIDELINES

- Depending on the specific work setting, the offering of immunizations may be required or recommended for employees who are potentially exposed to certain biological agents or in contact with certain animals. However, because of the wide range of biological agents or combinations of agents that may be present in a research institution, the specific immunizations or other health related measures that are indicated will be determined based on the risk assessment performed by the EH&S OHN in consultation with the UW EHC and the IBC as appropriate.
- To reduce the risk of occupationally acquired bloodborne disease, employees with a reasonably anticipated potential for exposure to human blood and its components, human bodily fluids, or other human tissues (including cell lines) must participate in the UW's BBP Program and be offered the hepatitis B vaccine in accordance with the Washington State Department of Safety and Health [requirements](#). After being informed of the risks versus benefits of immunization, a declination form must be signed if an employee declines the hepatitis B vaccine. This form then becomes part of the employee's health record that is maintained by the UW EHC. The BBP program is covered in detail in Appendix A of this manual.
- Immunization for other potentially infectious agents may be required after risk assessment by EH&S, the EHC, the IBC, and the PI. In this instance, a waiver must be signed if the employee declines to be vaccinated after being informed of the risks versus benefits of immunization. This waiver then becomes part of the employee's health record that is maintained by the UW EHC. For information about immunizations that may be required, contact an EH&S OHN at 206-221-7770.

D. ANIMAL USE MEDICAL SCREENING

- 1) The OHN provides an [AUMS](#) to identify medical conditions that could be adversely affected by work in the animal care and use environment. The AUMS is offered to all veterinary and animal husbandry staff, researchers and their staff, the IACUC members, volunteers, visiting scientists, students, and other individuals working in or entering areas with animals, animal tissues, or animal fluids. Employees have the option to decline the screening; if they do so, they must sign and date the form.
- 2) The AUMS form must be completed at least every three years for research staff and at least annually for husbandry, veterinary, and other research support staff. The OHN will provide phone or in-person consultation as needed for those who have increased risk of hazards associated with animals.

E. RESEARCH PROTOCOL REVIEW

- The EH&S OHN reviews all animal research protocol submissions to evaluate for occupational hazards.
- The EH&S OHN discusses the project with the PI, the UW EHC, other EH&S specialists, the IBC, and others (for example, the IACUC) as needed in order to provide comprehensive recommendations to be used in the laboratory or in the field.

- The review includes recommendations for immunizations, medical surveillance, post-exposure evaluation guidelines, training, workplace exposure controls, PPE, and the safe use of hazardous materials.
- The OHN sends the occupational health recommendations (OHR) to the PI electronically, with a copy sent to the Office of Animal Welfare, the UW EHC, and other health and safety personnel who may interface with the PI's laboratory.
- The EH&S OHN also reviews non-animal research protocols involving biohazards and provides recommendations for immunizations, medical surveillance, and post-exposure evaluation guidelines. These recommendations are based in part on review by other EH&S staff, such as biosafety officers, and review by the IBC.

F. POST EXPOSURE TREATMENT

- a. The [UW Exposure Response Poster](#) describes the actions to take in the event of a possible exposure. Should an employee experience an exposure to a hazardous or biologic agent, he or she must immediately perform first aid, and then call the EHC for evaluation. The employee must also call his/her supervisor and fill out the [OARS](#) either separately or with the supervisor's assistance.
- b. The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries requires that an exposure determination be made for anyone who is potentially exposed to human blood and its components, human bodily fluids, or other human tissues (including cell lines). This exposure determination is covered in detail in the BBP Program section of this manual. BBP exposures are treated in accordance with the [WISHA BBP regulations \(WAC 296-823\)](#) and the ["Updated U.S. Public Health Service Guidelines for the Management of Occupational Exposures to HBV, HCV, and HIV and Recommendations for Postexposure Prophylaxis" \(June 2001, with updates on HIV in Sept.2005\)](#).

G. EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

Employee occupational health records, including immunization records are maintained at one of the three UW EHCs in a secure password-protected database that is owned and maintained by Campus Health Services.

H. SERUM BANKING AND MONITORING

As a standard practice, serum from research personnel will not be banked. However, specific serum collection and/or monitoring programs may be offered in some cases. EH&S, in conjunction with the IBC review and in consultation with the UW EHC and the PI, will assist in making medical monitoring decisions. For more information, contact the EH&S OHN at 206-221-7770.

