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Safety Plan

At-risk individuals belong to many demographics that have been subject to discrimination and prejudice. These demographics include but are not limited to visible racial/ethnic minorities, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression (e.g., femme-identifying, transgender, non-binary), and religious affiliation (e.g., Muslim, Jewish, Sikh). However, considerations of who is at-risk should be fluid with respect to fieldwork and extend to any identity viewed as different from the local community in which the research is being conducted.

While the Field Research Office has taken commendable steps to improve safety in the field, these are mostly limited to measures preventing physical harm (e.g., from environmental conditions, wildlife, or research equipment). We propose more emphasis should be placed on the axes of safety regarding mental and emotional harms, and physical harms relating to interpersonal conduct among 1) field team members and 2) members of the public encountered during fieldwork. Students at the University of Alberta have been targeted by racial harassment in rural field locations and as such, increased attention to the interpersonal axis of fieldwork is imperative.

Throughout this document, fieldwork or field research includes observation, sample collection, surveys, and field testing in 1) urban sites (areas easily accessible by emergency services e.g., businesses, roads, homes, other private property), 2) uncontrolled sites (rural/remote areas not easily accessible by emergency services e.g., Crown land, random camping sites), and 3) controlled sites (collaborator-led sites e.g., mines, oil and gas sites, forestry operations, clinics, prisons, construction sites). We recommend the following measures be instituted for the Department of Renewable Resources and the Field Research Office, and we outline steps that individual supervisors can take. Finally, we share a Bill of Rights and Code of Conduct that can be integrated into the Field Research Office's safety documentation and training mandate:

- For Department of Renewable Resources and Field Research Office: ● All field researchers (whether in Urban, Uncontrolled, or Controlled Sites) should be required to take a first aid course, bystander intervention and de-escalation training, as well as field safety courses that have components that cover basic outdoor skills. Those conducting fieldwork in the Uncontrolled Sites should be required to take a more extensive first aid course such as wilderness first aid. Training should be provided on best practices for approaching community members to obtain land access before conducting field activities.
    - See the videos and resources from the University of California Riverside (https://training.ucr.edu/fieldworkleadership):
        - Trip Planning: Risk Management for Field Settings
        - Creating, Enforcing, and Promoting Safe Fieldwork Culture: Strategies aimed at protecting diverse researchers
        - Mental Health in the Field: Best Practices and Pitfalls

- ● Building a Better Fieldwork Future Workshop: Preventing Harassment & Assault in the Field
  - ■ See the webinar recording "Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and their institutions" https://cals.cornell.edu/saferscience
- ● The Field Activity Plan should be extended to include a Code of Conduct addressing behavioral expectations in the field and identifying measures in place to ensure the safety of at-risk individuals (as defined above). Alternately, signing off on a Code of Conduct should be implemented as an online course similar to Supervisory Training.
- ● Current Field Activity Plans emphasize communication between the field party and a safety contact (i.e. spot/Garmin) but should be updated to include means of communication between team members within the field (i.e. walkie-talkie) and what to do if separated.
- ● Along with instating the Code of Conduct (see section: Code of Conduct), the Field Research Office should convene a small committee, provided with relevant training, to evaluate and respond to reported Code of Conduct infractions to ensure the safety of all individuals in the field.
- ● All field sites (Urban, Controlled, and Uncontrolled, whether for coursework or research) should be audited to ensure the location and housing are appropriate, safe, and equitable for all identities. Regular, anonymized feedback from field researchers should be solicited to determine the climate and safety of field sites and accommodations and to engage supervisors in responding to this feedback. Campsites in rural areas or within public land use zones, mining camps, and oil camps are some locations where the environment may be hostile for at-risk individuals.
- ● All department- or institution-managed Controlled Sites should be provided resources to ensure they are clearly labeled as a part of the institution. On this signage, acceptable activities allowed at such locations should be included (e.g., birdwatching, dog walking, no public access).
- ● All current department and institutional field practices should be audited to remove barriers to inclusion in safety practices. Develop a proactive plan to alter detrimental (anti-inclusion and equity) practices and document the process to increase the transparency of decision-making.
- ● An official letter of support and uniforms with the University of Alberta logos (e.g., high-visibility vests) should be provided for researchers doing fieldwork with contact information. This provides additional credibility to the researcher, if and when they are approached and challenged.
- ● Supervisors and research groups should be informed about the benefits of acting responsibly and with care, as well as legal and social ramifications if they fail to invest in researcher safety during university-sanctioned fieldwork.
- ● For supervisors:
  - ● Supervisors should self-educate on the experience of your team members' identities and the corresponding risk that they may encounter in the field. This does not involve asking researchers to relive trauma surrounding their identity,

or even disclose aspects of their identity as a source of education. Rather, use available resources to self-educate. First-person accounts and resource compilations are available. Furthermore, self-educate on the politics, demographics, and culture of the areas surrounding established field site(s), in order to be fully aware of potential risks.

- Provide materials to clearly identify researchers and their purpose (e.g., signs for vehicles and field sites, safety vests, etc.). These items should be provided for the researcher so that their use is easily implemented.
- Have a conversation with all research team members on the anticipated risks and preparations to minimize risk. This can include a statement acknowledging that certain demographics may be at higher risk and that the supervisor is available to discuss with any researcher about concerns and proactive measures. Educational resources, such as this document should be made available to all researchers, who can then self-select to engage in a conversation about safety issues surrounding their specific identity(ies).
- Create a time and space to talk to research team members specifically about fieldwork safety concerns in advance of the field season, touch base with them throughout the season to address new concerns, and have a summarizing meeting with all team members after fieldwork has concluded. As a reminder, this is an uncomfortable reality and merits the need to establish a space and time for both parties (researcher and supervisor) to be ready and willing to engage in this important discussion.
  - Even after education, supervisors that do not share the same identity as their researchers will be unaware of all potential risk to researchers. If researchers bring up potential or experienced risks, validate their experiences and assist in modifying the project so that they can safely continue conducting research.
- At Controlled Sites, introduce researchers (via email or in-person) to the manager of those locations, if they exist. If there are multiple managers, researchers should be introduced to each manager to minimize any miscommunication that could lead to increased risk.
- When possible, show new researchers established field locations, teach them about the specific concerns of that field location, and inform them of the resources in accordance with established safety plans. Supervisors should be involved in contacting landowners or local community members to inform of research activities conducted in the area. The resources should have contact information about field site personnel relevant to research and safety (e.g., contact information of the local police department).
- Assist researchers in establishing safe housing accommodations before arriving at the field location. A safe and secure housing location includes the following: researchers are able to secure food, safe travel to and from field sites, and supportive points of contact in the local community.
- Review and agree upon fieldwork and safety plans with the researcher and the broader team before any fieldwork begins.
- Actively engage with researchers on how to reorganize fieldwork practices if and when there are restrictions on movement; for example, local ordinances limiting

activity (i.e., curfew, stay-at-home orders, etc.).

Bill of Rights:

The following rights should be guaranteed for all individuals conducting field researchers affiliated with the University of Alberta (whether conducting work in Controlled, Uncontrolled, or Urban sites), at all levels (including but not limited to volunteers, research assistants, technicians, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research fellows, or principal investigators). These rights are complementary to existing Field Research Office or Human Resources, Health, Safety, and Environmental regulations.

Right to respect, dignity, and professionalism
- All team members have the right to not experience or bear witness to misconduct from other team members as defined by the Code of Conduct. Any accusations of misconduct must be taken seriously and acted upon swiftly.

Right to privacy
- All team members have the right to a private space (i.e. a team member's room or tent). Each team member must respect the privacy of the team member's space and not enter it without their permission nor disturb a team member in their room/tent unnecessarily. If private accommodation is not possible, all participants must be comfortable with the arrangements.
- All team members have the right to privacy when using the bathroom. In some field situations, the use of indoor bathrooms is not possible and care must be taken to respect the privacy of team members outdoors.

Right to communicate
- All team members have the right to receive training in the use of satellite phones or other communication devices.
- All team members have the right to use a satellite phone or outside communication device during the field campaign and access to such devices should not be infringed. ● All team members have ownership of any physical communication such as text message records and are not obliged to share such records with any other team member. Outside communication is confidential and private.

Right to anonymity
- Any team member that submits a report of harassment or Code of Conduct violation has the right to maintain anonymity throughout the reporting process if they choose. The team member's identity shall not be revealed to the accused or reporting agency without their consent.

Right to rest
- All team members have the right to a rest day if they are physically or mentally exhausted as long as doing so does not infringe on the safety or wellbeing of other team members. A team member taking a rest day does not preclude other team members from continuing to work.

● All team members shall have access to and training for safety equipment ● All team members have the right to refuse or pause work if they have not been adequately trained, if the equipment is not provided, or if the field environment is not safe
● All efforts should be taken to minimize the risks to individuals with visible, marginalized identities in the case that the field environment presents hostile or dangerous conditions ● All team members shall be provided visible proof of credentials (including but not limited to decals for vehicles, high-visibility vest or hard hats with logos, and an official letter that describes their university affiliation)

Code of Conduct:

This code of conduct outlines both the expected and unacceptable behaviors for participating as a University of Alberta field researcher, at all levels (including but not limited to volunteers, research assistants, technicians, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research fellows, or principal investigators).

By signing below, you agree to the following code of conduct and accept the expressed consequences for violating them. This may include the termination from the project and review by the code of conduct committee.

This code of conduct should be reviewed by each team member and read out loud as a group. To participate in science activities in a remote setting (hereby termed "fieldwork"), each team member should sign the document and have access to the signed copy through the length of the field season. This document should be amended to the needs and goals of the field team.

Expected Behaviour:

By signing this document and participating as a University of Alberta field researcher, you agree to adhere to the following expected behaviors. These expectations are designed to promote professionalism within the group to ensure a positive group experience and to facilitate the formation of a community dynamic where we respect and support each other.

Team Interactions
● Be accepting of diverse viewpoints and allow all team members to express their opinions openly without judgment if viewpoints are not discriminatory. Scrutinize ideas, not individuals.
● Respect and be considerate of others without prioritizing some knowledges, such as western science, over others, such as local and Indigenous knowledge
● Allow all team members to partake in decision-making and do not exclude others from meetings.
● Be honest and accountable. If you violate any forms of misconduct or fail to meet expectations in some way, be open with the team members, admit fault, and strive to do better.
● Avoid knowingly making false or misleading statement(s) (or engaging in activities) that could be or be viewed as offensive or defamatory to a team member, group, or organization.

● Be able to recognize and avoid machismo (overly aggressive or chauvinistic actions). Avoid promoting a culture where "roughing it" is seen as a rite of passage. ● Ask for help when you need it and respect those who ask for help. Recognize that people have different strengths and some disabilities are invisible.

Recognizing the Context of the Work

- Be aware of, and address your positionality, power, privileges, and values. This includes recognizing the colonial histories, cultural biases, and structural marginalization that may have led to your position within the field team.
- Respect the landscape where you are staying including the land, water, plants, and animals that live there. Recognize that you are a guest and reduce your impact by following "Leave No Trace" principles. This includes making your best effort to leave the landscape how you originally found it.
- Respect the culture and community of the people that live on this land. Make efforts to learn the culture and value the knowledge that the residents hold from their deep-rooted experience with this environment. This includes respecting Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders and explicitly asking permission to take photographs of people and use their stories, ideas, and information. Make efforts to share data with the community and build relationships for future collaborations.

Respecting Personal Boundaries

- Believe victims of misconduct through all stages of the reporting process, take seriously the impact of that misconduct, and respect their anonymity through the reporting process if they desire.
- Ask permission to take photos or record team members in any way, and only post photos or video on public platforms if consent has been given
- Follow the rules laid out by the station manager including respecting the property and facilities.
- Respect the safety of others.

Unacceptable Behavior

Misconduct that will result in termination of fieldwork includes:
- Physical or verbal abuse, harassment, or assault
- Intimidation or bullying
- Coercion/Manipulation
- Threats (including but not limited to threats of violence, professional discreditation, unwarranted decreases in responsibilities, and public embarrassment.)
- Gender, race-based, age-based, ability-based, or sexual harassment ● Sexual misconduct including the inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in a public space.
- The use of hate speech directed at a marginalized group including comments about a person's gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, or national origin.
- Behavior that endangers the mental or physical health and safety of oneself or others
- Stalking

- Tampering with the proceedings of a misconduct report, including actions to inhibit, discredit, stop, or falsify the investigation of a misconduct case
- Retaliation against a person or group reporting code of conduct violations

Misconduct that will result in review by the code of conduct committee and possible termination from fieldwork includes:
- Acting as a bystander and not reporting misconduct
- The use of illicit drugs or excessive use of alcohol during field operations or while in town
- Furnishing alcoholic beverages to any person under the legal age in the locality or distribution of illicit drugs
- Dangerous driving
- Disregard for the personal property of others
- Loud and obnoxious behavior
- Disregard for quiet hours
- Repeatedly disregarding responsibilities
- Use of social or mainstream media to target team members in a way that could harm their privacy and/or reputation
- Deliberately mischaracterizing a person's gender identity, including through the use of a name or pronoun that the person has rejected

All team members have the responsibility to report all instances of unacceptable conduct as defined above to the appropriate party and see that the issue is reported to the outside contact personnel. All instances of misconduct require reporting no matter the severity.

Team members should follow an "Ask Once" policy when it comes to consensual sexual advances or "asking someone out" during field activities. An "Ask Once" policy ensures that all team members can only "ask out" an individual once. Asking out includes flirting, expressing interest, and/or making advances towards an individual. If at any point that individual states that they are not interested, brushes off the advance or does not reciprocate in a positive way, the team member must not continue to ask out the individual. If the team member continues to pursue the individual, it is considered harassment. We note that "asking out," even once, may not be appropriate in some contexts e.g., isolated uncontrolled sites.

What to Do if You Have Experienced Inappropriate Behavior

Each situation is unique. You are entitled to the following (not exhaustive): ● Talk to anyone about your experience
- Change your mind about talking to anyone about your experience at any time
- Report to any of the reporting options listed below
- Bring someone with you to provide support during reporting or any resulting discussions
- To seek reasonable accommodations to ensure the success of your work ● To seek medical assistance

Reporting an Incident
Multiple reporting avenues are available to individuals. Below is a list of resources to who you

can disclose an incident you observed or experienced.

- Institutional contact from Field Research Office: _____, Affiliation: _____,
  Contact information: _____
- <u>U of A Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate</u>
- <u>U of A Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Procedure</u>
- <u>Safe Disclosure Online Reporting Tool</u>
- <u>Association of Academic Staff at the University of Alberta (AASUA)</u>
- <u>Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA)</u>
- <u>Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO)</u>
- <u>Sexual Assault Centre</u>
- <u>Student Accessibility Services (SAS)</u>
- <u>Human Resources, Health, Safety, and Environment (HRHSE)</u>
- <u>Alberta Human Rights Commission</u>

Response to Reporting Code of Conduct Violation(s)

Concerns and reports will be addressed promptly by the code of conduct committee. First, the committee will ensure that immediate safety concerns have been addressed. Secondly, committee members will recuse themselves if there are strong conflicts of interest that would bias their decisions. A meeting amongst committee members will be arranged as soon as it is practical where neither the alleged harasser or target is present. Before or after the meeting, committee members will find more information about the incident, including but not limited to interviewing the alleged harasser (if safe) or interviewing witnesses. The committee will choose a response that best protects the community from future harm. This may include: ●
Termination from fieldwork
- Remove responsibilities, privilege, or access
- Temporary ban from team spaces
- Permanent ban from team spaces
- Recommendations for firing or demotion

Adverse action against a person or group as a result of a report will not be tolerated, and are subject to the consequences as outlined above.

I have read and understood the expected and unacceptable behavior for participating as a University of Alberta field researcher.

(Signature of team member)

Definitions

Bullying – Abusive conduct involving threatening, humiliating, or intimidating behavior directed at one or more people by one or more perpetrators that interferes with ability to work and is intended to cause physical or psychological harm.

Coercion – The use of threats or one's positionality or power to persuade someone to do

something.

Harassment – Defined as any unwelcome verbal or physical conduct based on race, color, religion, sex (includes sexual harassment and discrimination based on pregnancy), disability, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, and protected genetic information that is so objectively offensive as to alter the conditions of the individual's employment. Harassment unreasonably interferes with an employee's performance and can create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Retaliation – Adverse employment, academic or other actions against anyone reporting a violation of this code.

Sexual Harassment – Includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when the conduct is made as a condition of employment and when the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Stalking – Defined as repeatedly following, harassing, threatening, or intimidating including by telephone, mail, electronic communication, or social media.

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