

Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Social Science Research Review Board (SSRRB)

Requirement for CIMVHR researchers to obtain SSRRB approval

SSRRB approval is required prior to the conduct of all social science research that uses DND/CAF personnel as research, including that conducted under the auspices of CIMVHR. DND/CAF personnel includes DND civilian employees, CAF military members or their families, applicants for enrolment in the CAF and members of Canadian cadet organizations. Cadet organizations include the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, Royal Canadian Sea Cadets and Royal Canadian Army Cadets, and Junior Canadian Rangers. CAF members include currently serving members of the Regular and Reserve forces and, if established by the Governor in Council, the Special Force. Reserve Forces include the Primary Reserve, Supplementary Reserve, Canadian Rangers, and Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS). Research with veterans of the CAF falls outside of the purview of the SSRRB; however, veterans and their families may be included when longitudinal research follows a military member from when they are serving in uniform to after they have retired or released from the CAF.

As outlined in Chapter 8 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Social Science Research Involving Humans, social science research conducted by university-based researchers that uses DND/CAF personnel as research participants is considered to be cross-jurisdictional research. In accordance with Article 8.1 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement, the DND/CAF SSRRB has adopted Research Ethics Review Model #1 whereby independent ethics reviews are conducted by both the university Research Ethics Board (REB) as well as by the SSRRB. Final approval by the SSRRB is contingent upon institutional REB clearance.

What is out-of-scope for SSRRB review?

The SSRRB Mandate does not include natural science research involving humans. More specifically it does not include health or psychological research, such as might inform the diagnosis, classification or treatment of mental disorders and aberrant, maladaptive or abnormal behaviours and research related to the promotion, protection and restoration of health. Oversight of research in these areas with DND/CAF personnel is the responsibility of the Canadian Armed Forces Health Services Group and Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) Toronto.

Program evaluation, training evaluations and validations, quality control measures and client satisfaction research, may use similar tools for data collection but would not normally be considered social science research and therefore not fall under the authority of the SSRRB. These types of projects are generally concerned with asking about fact-based experiences about a service or program and not perceptions that concern organizational, group or individual behaviour.

While not an exhaustive list, the following research and/or methods for obtaining information generally do not require SSRRB review or approval:

- Literature reviews or reviews of secondary sources, or information in the public domain that is protected by law or where there is no expectation of privacy (i.e., social media);
- Secondary analyses of previously collected research data;
- Course critiques;

- Verification of performance of services or delivery of goods under contractual arrangements;
- Consultations involving a two-way process of engagement to exchange information between stakeholders and participants, if there is no expectation of privacy;
- Research in the field of natural sciences; or
- Program evaluation

Requirement for CIMVHR-funded researchers to have a DND/CAF sponsor

Because of the operational nature of the DND/CAF and potential disruption of operations, training or day-to-day work and the possibility that research may contribute to survey or research fatigue, external researchers, including those conducting CIMVHR-funded research projects, are required to have an authoritative DND/CAF sponsor who has functional authority for the type of research being conducted (e.g., Director General Personnel and Family Support Services for research with military families). Some examples of support that may be provided by sponsors include: sending invitation emails to DND/CAF personnel on behalf of the researcher; signing and distributing invitation letters; organizing on-site survey administrations, focus groups and interviews, etc.; ensuring CAF command, formation, base, wing and unit commanders or DND Level 1 advisors are aware of their personnel's involvement with a project; and obtaining approvals and administering financial or other support.

Researchers are personally responsible for finding a suitable DND/CAF sponsor, which includes making contact with potential sponsors, communicating with them concerning the planned research and obtaining agreement with respect to any support that may be required (e.g., arranging focus groups), and obtaining a signed SSRRB Sponsorship Form. While it is the sole responsibility of a researcher to acquire a DND/CAF sponsor, the SSRRB coordination staff **may** be able to provide advice as to which CAF command or DND organization could be approached by a researcher seeking sponsorship.

CIMVHR-funded researchers should consider finding a DND/CAF sponsor as early as possible in their research planning process as they will be required to include a form signed by the sponsor when they submit their research proposal to the SSRRB. It is recommended that researchers provide potential DND/CAF sponsors with sufficient information about their planned research so that they can determine whether or not it is of interest and value to the DND/CAF and so that they have a clear understanding of exactly what support they are being asked to provide to the researcher.

Requirement for CAF command headquarters approval

This requirement is in addition to obtaining an authoritative DND/CAF sponsor, as outlined above. While the sponsor **may have the authority** to permit the participation of CAF military personnel within their organization in a social science research project, the inclusion of personnel serving within a CAF command (e.g., Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force, and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command) requires permission from each involved command headquarters. There is a tremendous amount of research being conducted using DND/CAF personnel as participants and it is incumbent upon CAF commanders to ensure that their personnel and units are not inundated with research requests to the detriment of individual, unit or operational interests and that the research will be of benefit to the CAF. Note that command headquarters approval does not apply to research with CAF military families. SSRRB staff will inform CIMVHR-funded researchers whether or not they will require approval by any CAF command headquarters.

Once it has been determined that approval by one or more CAF command headquarters is required, the SSRRB will send a copy of the formal research submission to involved CAF command headquarters and request approval-in-principle for personnel serving within the command to participate in the research project. CAF commands make independent assessments and their decisions are binding upon the SSRRB and the researcher. Without CAF command approval, no personnel from within that command may be invited to participate in a CIMVHR-funded research project.

How do CIMVHR-funded researchers obtain SSRRB approval?

If the planned research meets the criteria listed above, researchers are strongly encouraged to make initial contact with the SSRRB as soon as they have been awarded a CIMVHR-funded research project. Initial contact is made by sending an email to: SSRRB-CERSS@forces.gc.ca, with a copy to the appropriate CIMVHR Project Coordinator. In the email, please identify the project as CIMVHR-funded research and provide an overview of the project. You can also consider including a copy of your university REB submission. After receipt of your email, the SSRRB coordination staff will contact you to discuss your planned research, including SSRRB processing timelines, and will then email you copies of the most recent version of the SSRRB Submission Form and the procedures document. Given variations in SSRRB workload, the earlier you contact the SSRRB the more likely you are to receive approval in a timely manner.