AAHRPP Accreditation Factsheet

What is AAHRPP Accreditation?

The Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) is an independent, non-profit accrediting body that provides the “gold standard” of assurance that an organization’s human research protection program meets rigorous standards for quality and protection.

“To earn accreditation, organizations must provide tangible evidence—through policies, procedures, and practices—of their commitment to scientifically and ethically sound research and to continuous improvement.” (From aahrpp.org)

AAHRPP accreditation is voluntary—it is not mandated by federal regulations. It is often stated that the federal regulations for protections of human subjects are the floor—the minimum that has to be done. Organizations that are accredited by AAHRPP rise well above the floor in their commitment to the protection of human subjects.

Why would we want to be accredited?

1. More and more institutions are becoming accredited. We are currently one of four academic medical institutions in Texas without AAHRPP accreditation (UT Southwestern, University of North Texas HSC, Texas A&M HSC, and TTUHSC). From the AAHRPP website: “More than 60 percent of U.S. research-intensive universities and 65 percent of U.S. medical schools are either AAHRPP accredited or have begun the accreditation process. Increasingly, organizations that have not earned AAHRPP accreditation are being asked, ‘Why not?’ “

2. Ensures the highest possible standards and protections for human subjects, while reducing the risk of noncompliance

3. Provides a competitive edge for sponsors/funders

4. May increase both the efficiency and the consistency of the IRB review process.

5. Perhaps enhanced standing with US federal agencies

What do we have to do?

1. Prepare and submit application:
   - Get commitment from the highest level—AAHRPP accreditation requires buy-in from the institution itself (to include budgetary support)
   - Establish an accreditation team—Identify and invite key individuals to assist
   - Self-assessment (including creation of policies, procedures and tools that we are currently lacking)
   - Check for inconsistencies—Make sure policies don’t conflict and that procedures match policies
2. On-site evaluation—AAHRPP reviews application and schedules a visit in order to evaluate performance with regard to Accreditation Standards. Performance in 3 domains is evaluated:
   - Domain I – Organization-the institution meets the range of responsibilities of the human research protection program
   - Domain II—Institutional Review Board—requirements for ethical oversight of research
   - Domain III—Researchers and Research staff—Assesses that those conducting the research are competent, informed, conscientious, compassionate and responsible
3. AAHRPP Council reviews recommendations from evaluation team
4. We are notified of status.

What does it cost?

1. Dollar costs for the number of protocols reviewed by the Lubbock and Amarillo IRBs:
   - $17,800 application fee (2014 rate)
   - $7600 annual fee (2013 rate) (expectation of 4-6% increases per year)
2. Considerable expenditure of time by the accreditation committee to conduct self-assessment, create/revise policies, and prepare application. (Anecdotally, have heard that this could be a full-time job for 18 months; The AAHRPP website indicates that the preparation should be considered “rigorous, but not overwhelming.”)
3. Change of any sort is sometimes uncomfortable.

Where can I get more information?

The AAHRPP website provides a wealth of information for institutions considering accreditation: http://www.aahrpp.org/

Locally, Beth Taraban (Director of the Research Integrity Office) will be coordinating the accreditation process. She can be reached at Beth.Taraban@ttuhsc.edu or 806-743-4566.