Health Research Ethics Authority

Activity Plan

April 1, 2026 - March 31, 2029

Chairperson's Message

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2026-29 Activity Plan for the Health Research Ethics Authority hereafter referred to as the Authority. Under the **Transparency and Accountability Act,** the Authority is defined as a Category 3 entity, and as such, will be planning and reporting in keeping with these requirements. This plan better enables the Authority to enhance recognition of ethical issues related to health research and achieve its accountability requirements to the public.

In the development of this Activity Plan, consideration was given to Government's strategic directions in the area of health and community services: strengthening the research ethics review process and enhancing awareness of the ethical conduct of health research in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure excellence and integrity in health research, thereby benefiting the people of this province.

My signature below is indicative of the Authority's accountability for the preparation of this Activity Plan and achievement of the objectives contained in this Activity Plan.

For the purposes of this document, health research refers only to health research involving human participants as defined in the **Health Research Ethics Act** (subsection 2(h)).

Sincerely,

Regina Coady

Regina Coady, Chairperson
Health Research Ethics Authority

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1.0 OVERVIEW

The Authority was officially established with the proclamation of the **Health Research Ethics Authority Act** in July 2011, which was repealed and replaced on July 1, 2025 by the Health Research Ethics Act (the Act). The Act requires that all health research involving human participants conducted in the province be approved or acknowledged by a Newfoundland and Labrador research ethics review board established in accordance with the Act. Minimal risk health research which is subject to a current research ethics approval issued within 6 months, where the research ethics approval was granted by a competent Canadian research ethics body within the meaning of the the Act, s.2(f), may be conducted pursuant to an acknowledgement by the Authority. The Authority has the power and mandate to ensure that participants in health research in Newfoundland and Labrador are protected and to facilitate the ethics review process in the province. The Authority aims to protect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who participate in research by ensuring excellence in research ethics review within the province. The Authority is also responsible for enhancing awareness of the ethical dimension of health research.

Membership

The Authority is an independent, not-for-profit corporation with an administrative board predominantly appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services. The Authority has seven directors: a person employed by Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS), a person employed by Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (MUN), a person employed by the Department of Health and Community Services, three persons chosen to represent the public of the province, and the chairperson of the Health Research Ethics Board (HREB), who shall be a non-voting director. The Chairperson of the Authority is appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services after consultation with the chief executive officer of NLHS and president of MUN. The Ethics Director sits as non-voting member of the Board (see Appendix A).

The Ethics Director is the senior employee of the Authority and reports to the Board of Directors of the Authority.

Funding

The Authority’s operating budget will be derived from revenue collected from review fees levied by industry-sponsored research and other for-profit entities as well as funding provided from MUN and NLHS. Additional support is provided in kind by MUN and NLHS as per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Authority, MUN, NLHS and the Department of Health and Community Services.

2.0 Mandate

Pursuant to section 6 of the Act, the Authority shall:

- Provide oversight of the ethics review process to ensure that health research is conducted in an ethical manner; and
- Be responsible for enhancing awareness of the ethical dimension of health research.

Further information is available on the Authority website, www.hrea.ca.

3.0 Values

Quality – Promoting the pursuit of excellence in research and ethics review of all health research in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Integrity – Promoting a consistent culture of transparency and accountability in decision-making and communication to all of our vested parties and holding ourselves to the highest ethical standards.

Collaboration – Recognizing and valuing the diversity of our stakeholders and engaging in a positive manner that is respectful of others and their different perspectives.

Responsiveness – Recognizing and adapting to the changing research and regulatory environment.

Justice – Promoting the fair and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens of research participation in such a way that no portion of the population is unduly burdened by the harms of research or denied the benefits of knowledge generated.

4.0 Primary Clients

The general public, health researchers and health research participants are the primary clients of the Authority. In fulfilling its mandate, the Authority works closely with its key stakeholders including MUN, NLHS and the Department of Health and Community Services. The Authority also supports Newfoundland and Labrador research ethics bodies approved by the Authority, and competent Canadian research ethics bodies from other Canadian jurisdictions.

5.0 Vision

Excellence in Research Ethics Review

The Authority is committed to this vision by ensuring that all health research involving human participants is based on good science, meets ethical standards, and complies with international best practice. The advancement of safe, ethical, and impactful health research can provide residents with access to innovative and evidence-informed discoveries and treatments that contribute to advancements in healthcare, and improved health outcomes. The Authority will contribute to this vision by engaging in activities to generate knowledge in relation to the ethical conduct of health research involving human participants and promoting the integrity of the health research environment.

6.0 Lines of Business

Under the Act, the Authority is responsible for appointing the HREB. The HREB has the legislated authority and responsibility for the ethics review and approval of applications for health research projects involving human participants. By regulation, all genetics and genomics research conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador must be reviewed by the HREB. Other forms of health research may be reviewed by the HREB, an approved research ethics bodies established pursuant to section 9 of the Act, or a competent Canadian research ethics body as defined by section 2(f) of the Act. The HREB, and any approved research ethics body under the Act, are accountable to the Authority.

7.0 Annual Objective

The Authority's mandate ensures that health research involving human participants conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador is conducted in an ethical manner. This is achieved by requiring ethics approval by the HREB, a research ethics body approved by the Authority, or a competent Canadian research ethics body for all health research involving human participants conducted in the province. This is also facilitated by the requirement that the HREB, a research ethics body approved by the Authority, or a competent Canadian research ethics body will apply the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) and, as applicable, the International Conference for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use ICH Harmonised Guideline: Guideline for Good Clinical Practice E6(R3) (see Appendix B). These are Canadian and international guidelines for the ethical conduct of research involving humans and/or human biological materials. Other guidelines or standards may also be applied to the review and oversight of health research as approved by the Authority. Ethical principles and guidelines play an important role in advancing the pursuit of knowledge while protecting and respecting research participants. The Authority conducts its business in a fiscally responsible manner.

Over the course of 2026-29, the Authority endeavors to strengthen the governance of the research ethics process in the province. Furthermore, in meeting its objective, the Authority will promote the ethical conduct of health research within Newfoundland and Labrador by implementing outreach and communication initiatives.

The Authority will be reporting on the following Objective in each of the three years covered in this plan.

Objective: By March 31, 2027, 2028, 2029, the Authority will have fully operationalized the **Health Research Ethics Act** through development of a governance framework, and education and engagement with vested parties.

Appendix A: Health Research Ethics Authority Membership

As of 31 March 2026:

Position Title	**Appointee/ Represents**
Regina Coady, Director	Public
Appointment Pending, Director	Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS)
Dr. Tana Allen, Director	Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
Ms. Gillian Sweeney, Director	Department of Health and Community Services
Dr. Fern Brunger, HREB Chairperson (non-voting), Director	Health Research Ethics Board
Appointment Pending, Director	Public
Appointment Pending, Director	Public

Barbara Mason, HREA Ethics Director, serves on the Board of Directors in an administrative support role.

Appendix B – Reference Documents

The following reference documents support the work of the Authority and can be accessed at:

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2022) Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2022) (ethics.gc.ca)

International Council For Harmonisation Of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use ICH Harmonised Guideline: Guideline for Good Clinical Practice E6(R3)

Contact Information

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