

From: research.listserv@mssm.edu <research.listserv@mssm.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, January 5, 2022 12:28 PM
Subject: [Dean's Office] **Important information for reviewers of federal grants**



Research Alert

Everyone,

We are writing to remind everyone of the need to maintain strict confidentiality when reviewing NIH grant proposals. While most do not need any reminder, we have received recent reports from NIH that some Mount Sinai faculty are not adhering to the published policies. Specifically, while the sharing of grants with your trainees may seem like a good training opportunity, this practice is a serious violation of the NIH confidentiality requirements. Only those individuals assigned to a given study section or review panel are allowed access to grant materials. Exceptions must be requested to NIH, in writing, and approved. For training, reviewers can write to NIH requesting permission to allow trainees to view NIH grants. However, this exception is limited to a training exercise. Final reviews must be written by subject matter experts, as intended by the NIH Program Officers, and not by students or postdocs considered novices in the field.

Links to the NIH Grants Confidentiality Policy are attached below for your review. Going forward, we may require Mount Sinai faculty to confirm their understanding of NIH Policies as a component of the annual Conflicts of Interest process. We must demonstrate to NIH that our faculty are fully aware of and compliant with current requirements. This is a major component of our institutional commitment to excellence and our PHS Assurance as recipients of NIH Funding.

We want to also make sure that everyone is aware of the possible consequences for breaches in integrity of the NIH Review Process:

If the NIH determines that a situation involves a breach of integrity (including confidentiality and/or security) in the peer review process, the NIH in coordination with other offices may take action(s) including, but not limited to:

- notifying the individuals and institutions involved.
- terminating the reviewer's or Council member's service in peer review.
- pursuing a referral for government-wide suspension or debarment.
- referring the matter to the NIH Office of Management Assessment and possibly to the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services, which could result in criminal penalties, fines, imprisonment, and/or other action(s).

[Maintaining Security and Confidentiality in NIH Peer Review: Rules, Responsibilities and Possible Consequences](#)

https://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/guidelines_general/Confidentiality_CertificationsPR.pdf

Please review these requirements and ensure that you fully understand these expectations as a grant reviewer. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact Reginald Miller, Jessica Moise, or me.

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