How can institutions and their IACUCs best prepare for a pandemic?

Institutions must adhere to provisions of the PHS Policy, the Guide, and the commitments detailed in their Animal Welfare Assurance with OLAW. This includes advance planning for conditions that could arise as a result of a human pandemic (e.g., influenza) or outbreaks of novel infections (e.g., coronavirus disease 2019) that could jeopardize the health and wellbeing of animals because of a lack of personnel to care for the animals and/or to conduct IACUC official business.

Pandemic plans developed by institutions and IACUCs should include consideration of the following:

- Animal facilities must be maintained at a level to ensure animal welfare. Plans should consider appropriate staffing levels, cross-training to cover critical operations, and adequate inventories of essential supplies (e.g., feed, bedding, personal protective equipment, cagewash supplies).
- The IACUC should develop a plan for conducting official business during a pandemic event, taking into account the following:
  - The IACUC must continue to be properly constituted.
  - A quorum is required to conduct official business at a convened meeting.
  - The IACUC must ensure that protocol approvals are not allowed to expire or if they do expire, that no further animal activities (e.g., data collection) are conducted.
  - Appointment and training of IACUC members (including nonscientific members and alternates) should be considered as a part of the plan. (See NOT-OD-01-017)

In devising a pandemic plan, the institution may wish to consider using options provided in the PHS Policy that it does not choose to use in the normal operation of its animal care and use program. Social distancing means focused measures to reduce contact among people. The PHS Policy contains some provisions that can be instituted as social distancing measures to prevent the spread of disease, including:

- The IACUC may institute alternatives to face-to-face meetings such as teleconference or video conferencing (NOT-OD-06-052).
- The number of IACUC meetings may be reduced to as few as one every six months, the minimum allowed by the Guide.
- The IACUC may choose to expand their use of designated member review.

For information about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), see:

- [https://medlineplus.gov/coronavirusinfections.html](https://medlineplus.gov/coronavirusinfections.html)

For resources that may be helpful in developing an institutional pandemic plan, see:
Additional guidance will be developed and posted on the OLAW website if an emergency situation is sufficiently severe and long-lasting that OLAW determines that the above suggestions do not meet the needs of the research community and funding components. OLAW is the only entity authorized to make determinations regarding waivers to provisions of the PHS Policy.