



# Northwood Researcher's Handbook

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## **Welcome & Purpose of Handbook**

Northwood welcomes all opportunities to enhance its knowledge in pursuit of excellence in services for older adults and those at risk in the community. We trust this Handbook will provide a user-friendly document with a clear depiction of our requirements for all research conducted within the organization. These expectations include research involving residents, clients, staff, volunteers and all others within our community outreach programs. The Handbook provides an introduction to Northwood, its policy, definitions and guiding principles governing research activities, along with the processes expected of all applications.

## **Introduction to 'Northwood'**

Northwood is the largest not-for-profit continuing care organization in Atlantic Canada. We have provided long term care, homecare, and independent living and community outreach programs to seniors and persons at risk for over 50 years. See Northwood's website – <https://northwood.care/> for a full description of the organization.

We have always taken pride in our approach to delivering services. It is an approach that reflects our commitment to quality, our focus on building a strong relationship with clients, staff and the community and our willingness to invest in the future. Since our inception in 1962, we have been a strong advocate for people and their right to live lives of dignity and purpose. Today, we continue to play a key role in shaping the future of continuing care by participating with the community in exploring new ideas. Our commitment to those we serve is reflected in our mission and values.

**Our Mission:** As a leader in continuing care, we build meaningful relationships with our client's every day and make a positive difference in the communities we serve.

**Our Vision:** People living life to the fullest, flourishing in a community of belonging, dignity and choice

## **Northwood's Values**

### **We Respect Everyone**

Each of us as are responsible for ensuring that all members of the Northwood Community feels welcomed, valued and safe. We celebrate diversity with open minds and open hearts.

### **Everyone Plays a Part**

Each person has a role to play in helping to achieve Northwood's mission and goals. Our combined talents and dedication makes us stronger together.

### **We promote Social Justice**

We believe in using our voice to influence positive change and fairness, especially for those who cannot speak for themselves.

### **We are all Accountable**

Each person is accountable for their actions in delivering service, proper use and respect of resources, fostering healthy relationships, and living our values.

### **We can Always Do Better**

Achieving excellence in all our programs and services is based on learning from our experiences, applying the best evidence and setting the highest standards. We value our ability to challenge the status quo in pursuing new opportunities.

## **Corporate Policy Governing the Conduct of Research**

'All research activities conducted at Northwood follow an established ethical and administrative process to ensure the safety of participants; only quality and appropriate research is conducted' (Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans).

Further to this policy, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)* governs all research activities at Northwood. Specifically, Northwood: (1) defines the mechanisms to deliver those standards; (2) describes the monitoring and assessment of research projects; and (3) establishes protocols to ensure good quality of research associated with the organization by promoting good practice, preventing misconduct, enhancing ethical quality and reducing adverse incidents. Northwood will identify the accountability and responsibility of all parties involved in the research. A Research Advisory Council has been established to ensure the research activities at Northwood meet these *Tri-Council* standards.

## **Northwood's Vision for Research**

Northwood...Enhancing continuing care practice through research and shared knowledge.

## **Northwood's Philosophy of Research**

As a learning organization, we seek to further our knowledge in support of our Mission and Values. In keeping with our Values, this philosophy includes research activities of potential benefit to residents/clients/staff, volunteers, and the larger community. To that end, we seek to base our services on sound evidence through the integration of research findings into practice and to influence policy.

## **Northwood's Ethical Guiding Principles**

The principles of respect, trust, recognition and confidentiality guide all research activities. We adopt the *Tri-Council (TCPS)* 'Guiding Ethical Principles' citing 'respect for human dignity, for a free and informed consent, for vulnerable persons, for privacy and confidentiality, for justice and inclusiveness; balancing harm and benefits, minimizing harm and maximizing benefit.'

### **Specifically, Northwood's Guiding Principles are:**

**Respect for Human Dignity and Vulnerability:** The organization ensures the protection of the multiple interests of the research subject. Those individuals with diminished competence and/or decision making capacity are entitled to special care against abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

**Commitment to the Research:** The organization assures the continued support and commitment, where appropriate, (unless harms outweigh the benefits) of all research projects regardless of expected outcome and maintains and develops external relationships for future research opportunities. All efforts will be made to address any conflicts that may arise.

**Commitment to Quality and Excellence:** The organization will continue to consider research proposals that will provide quality information that is beneficial for all parties in the research.

**Commitment to the Highest Standards:** The organization shall implement a research review process that has fair methods and standards. Justice, inclusiveness, fairness and equity must be existent to ensure subjects are not exploited for the advancement of knowledge.

**Accountability and Responsibility:** The organization shall ensure the maintenance of a favorable harms-benefit balance. A maximization of benefits shall be maintained so the subject(s) and society receive an obvious benefit from the research conducted. Every effort must be taken to minimize harm and risk, and human participation must be considered essential to the increase of knowledge. The minimization of harm is imperative.

**Protection:** All safety policies and guidelines of the organization shall be followed for the protection of all parties involved in the research.

**Trust:** The organization shall invoke strict guidelines of privacy and confidentiality for the access, control and dissemination of personal information. (Northwood's adherence to the Personal Health Information Act also applies within the context of research activities). The full clarity of research objectives is essential to ensure research subjects understand the extent of the research and only at that time can they make free and informed decisions for consent.

Furthermore, Northwood undertakes to ensure that all requests will be responded to in a timely fashion.

## **Research Involving Humans**

Northwood requires two approvals for the acceptance of external research proposals:

1. Written approval from a registered/university Research Ethics Board.
2. Written Approval from the CEO of Northwood, following an internal review utilizing the 'Northwood Specific Criteria' as outlined under the Procedure, page 7.

## **Clinical Drug Trials**

The stringent rules governing clinical drug trials, as per the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* requirements will be adhered to. All requests must be approved through a registered/university Research Ethics Board, prior to being reviewed at Northwood for appropriateness and timing. For clinical drug trials involving Northwood Homecare clients, a separate approval process is first required by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Continuing Care Branch.

## **Procedure for Approval of Proposals**

Northwood's Research Advisory Council (RAC) reviews all applications to conduct research based on the criteria outlined in this document on page 7. The RAC then makes a recommendation to the CEO/ Delegate who makes the final decision, based on RAC recommendations and operational requirements of the Organization. The Co-Chairs of RAC may contact the Applicant should any questions arise during the review process. The CEO/ Delegate informs the applicant by letter of the decision.

The format for applications covers the required information as documented below. The application must include documentation of approval from a registered/university Research Ethics Board as previously noted, along with the short version (2 page) CV(s) of the Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor(s).

In addition, Northwood may require completion of a recent successful criminal record check prior to any research being initiated with Northwood stakeholders. Other requirements may be requested depending on the nature of the research.

Format for Application:

1. Review this handbook in its entirety and the Northwood website for general information.
2. Download and complete the form [Application to Conduct Research Cover Page](#)
3. Complete a proposal (no more than 10 pages, excluding appendices and executive summary) based on the [Research Proposal Guidelines](#)
4. Prior to submission, assess proposal for compliance with the 'Northwood Specific Criteria for Assessment of Proposals' on page 7, and the 'Guidelines for Researchers.' page 7-8. These will be the criteria used by the Research Advisory Council in the overall assessment of your proposal.
5. Attach the certificate of approval from a registered/university Research Ethics Board, or note if this is pending; if so include a copy of the application.
6. Submit proposal and required copies to the Research Advisory Council at [research@nwood.ns.ca](mailto:research@nwood.ns.ca)

#### Application to Conduct Research

A Northwood Internal Liaison person will be designated by the Research Advisory Council for each approved research project and this person will be the ongoing liaison for the Researcher.

#### Internal Applications

The application for approval follows the same procedure. Northwood's Research Advisory Council will explore avenues for the provision of the research ethics approval for these internal applications.

#### Submission Dates

Applications are reviewed on an ongoing basis. A four to six-week timeframe is to be expected for a response to a research proposal application. Depending on the nature of the proposal or required follow-up, the final decision may take longer to be received.

### **Northwood Specific Criteria for Assessment of Proposals**

The proposal will be assessed for:

1. Relevance to Northwood's Mission and Values (see page 3).
2. Evidence of ethical, spiritual and cultural competence. Ethical and spiritual competence will be assessed against 'Northwood's Guiding Principles' (see page 4-5); it is expected that cultural competence will be reflected in the application's documented awareness of the Northwood community.
3. A design and implementation plan that supports 'Northwood's Guiding Principles.'

4. Appropriateness and timing of the request. Internal criteria to determine this includes evidence that the organization has the necessary time, staff, space and financial requirements to meet the request and that the research will be of potential benefit to the health and well-being of the Northwood community.
5. Adherence to Northwood's operating policy regarding documentation of a criminal record check within the past 12 months, as applicable for members of the research team
6. The documentation is to be provided by the Researchers prior to research being conducted. A conditional approval may be given pending receipt of the criminal record document if required.

## **Northwood's Guidelines for Researchers**

1. Researchers must conduct research at a time convenient to the facility/home, resident/client care routines, and staff schedules.
2. Researchers are responsible for all costs incurred during research, unless specifically documented in the 'Proposal Review Decision' letter which is sent to the Researcher upon approval of the application.
3. The Northwood Internal Liaison will assist in the identification of potential participants. With the individual's agreement, we will provide the Researcher with the name. The Researcher will be responsible to meet with the participant and gain the appropriate consent. In the situation where a potential participant is not felt to be capable of making their own decisions, the Northwood Internal Liaison will assure that an appropriate person is approached who can give consent if they wish to do so. The cost of notification will be provided by the Researcher.
4. A plan for dissemination of the results of the research is to be included in the application.
5. Contributions by Northwood are to be acknowledged by the Researcher in any written or verbal reports, publications or communiques, keeping in mind the comments in the 'Intellectual Property' statement (page 8).
6. An annual progress report is required from the date of approval; additional reports may be necessary depending on the nature of the research.
7. Researchers are expected to notify the Research Advisory Council promptly when the project concludes.
8. An electronic copy of the final report is to be provided to the Research Advisory Council. Additionally, a Research Summary/ Final Report must be provided electronically for internal distribution and posting on the Northwood website, in a user friendly format for public review.

### **Researcher Responsibility Agreement:**

Upon receipt of approval, the Co-Chair of the Research Advisory Council will send a letter to the Researcher, including a document entitled 'Researcher Responsibility Agreement'. The Researcher is required to complete, sign and return the document to Northwood.

#### **Terms & Renewal of Approvals:**

Northwood's approvals for research projects are valid for one year from date of approval. Northwood also requires notification of any amendments made to the original proposal. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to submit a renewal or amendment application to the Research Advisory Council for a review, using the form: 'Application for Amendment of Research Agreement' (included under Innovation section on the website). If amendments require additional approval from the Research Ethics Board the new certificate must be attached.

## **Intellectual Property**

The Researcher must indicate their expectations regarding data ownership. An agreement will be reached between Northwood and the Researcher as to Northwood's use of such data to enhance its practice. Researchers who collect their own data, in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* reserve the right to data ownership. Data used for secondary analysis remain the property of Northwood.

A plan for dissemination of the results of the research is to be determined as part of the approval process. Northwood reserves the right for its name to be included or excluded as a supporting partner in the results, pending a review of the final report by the RAC and CEO/ Delegate. As the results may affect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, it may not be possible to state Northwood as the site of data collection. We require that Researchers follow the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* in that regard.

Northwood requires that confidentiality and length of storage of data collected be maintained as in keeping with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement and Nova Scotia's Personal Health Information Act*

Northwood encourages publication and conference presentations of research activities. Publications/presentations may be co-authored/ co-presented with a Northwood staff person, where appropriate.

## **Research Partnerships**

If you are requesting that Northwood be named as a partner/ co-applicant/ or collaborator on a funding application, this partnership still requires approval. Although there is not an application to be submitted through the review process, the Research Application Cover Page is required to be submitted, articulating the purpose of the project and, as specifically as possible, the commitment being sought from Northwood. Please note, if the project is funded, then a full proposal for review by the RAC is still required. Approval of a partnership does not automatically mean that the proposal will be approved as submitted.

## **Letters of Support**

Researchers may seek a letter of support to accompany ethics and/or funding applications. Northwood will work with the researcher to ensure the letter of support is reflective of the *potential* support offered by the organization. Please note, if the project is funded then a full proposal for review by RAC is still required. A letter of support does not automatically mean that the proposal will be approved as submitted.

## **Contact Information**

Email: [research@nwood.ns.ca](mailto:research@nwood.ns.ca)

Website: <https://northwood.care/about-northwood/innovation-research/>

## Glossary of Definitions

**The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)** describes the policies of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). (Government of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement*, 2006 version). These three Agencies have adopted this policy as their standard of ethical conduct for research involving humans.

Northwood uses the following definitions from the *Tri-Council Policy*:

### **Research:**

A systematic investigation to establish facts, principles or generalizable knowledge (Article 1.1 (a), Section I). Intent to disseminate the results of the investigation in the form of a report, thesis, book, and journal article or conference presentation may also signal a scholarly intent.

### **Research Involving Human Subjects:**

Research which includes observation of people going about their daily activities, evaluation of new teaching methods, testing of new drugs or medical devices, interviewing an individual in public life for a scholarly purpose, and research involving human remains, cadavers, tissues, biological fluids, embryos or fetuses. It does not include research about an individual (usually in the public arena or an artist) based exclusively on publicly available information such as documents, records, works, performances, archival materials or third-party interviews.

### **Quality Improvement:**

Involves an assessment of the characteristics, attributes or effectiveness of a program, service, protocol or policy with the intention of improving/changing the program, services, protocol or policy and for which there is no immediate or future intention/expectation to share the results beyond the institution. In other words, it is intended for internal decision making.

**Continuing Care** contributes to the integrated continuum of health services by providing a range of home, community and residentially based services to support individuals with identified health needs.

Care is provided in a manner that enables the individual to live as independently as possible in the community or in a residentially based service. In most cases, the need for care and support is for the longer term (continuing care).