



**NIH Biosafety Modernization Initiative Engagement Summary
University of Chicago Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)
February 13, 2026**

Background

NIH announced its Biosafety Modernization Initiative in Fall 2025 and began an expansive plan for engaging stakeholders. In addition to holding six regional listening sessions, NIH also participated in smaller engagements to gather individual input to help inform a new NIH biosafety policy.

NIH met with the University of Chicago IBC, which oversees a wide range of research, including several clinical trials involving human gene transfer.

Event Summary

Attendees provided individual feedback on several topics, including some of the following comments and input:

- Expanding the scope to include wild type agents, replicative deficient viral agents, prions, and toxin genes, is appropriate from a risk-based perspective.
- NIH may wish to consider the inclusion of non-recombinant means of genetic modification, such as chemical or radiation mutagenesis, within the new policy's scope.
- It would be helpful for institutions to be empowered to make containment lowering decisions without NIH. It was acknowledged, though, that institutions vary in the resources and expertise of staff.
- A tiering system for clinical trials involving human gene transfer would be helpful so that low-risk trials do not require IBC review.
- Incident reporting should be based on the risk of the exposure as opposed to broad categories.

NIH thanked individuals for their comments and encouraged participants to continue providing feedback through the mechanisms listed on the NIH Office of Science Policy website.