

**RUTGERS-CAMDEN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CENTER**  
**Early Learning Research Academy \* Rutgers/LEAP Centers of Excellence \***  
**Leadership and Community Development \* Global Development**

**General Guidelines for Research and Investigations**

**CLC Overview:** The Community Leadership Center is the largest research and applied learning unit operating on the Rutgers-Camden Campus. It was created in 1990 by Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration, and focuses its work in four strategic areas: (1) Birth–16 Pipeline Educational Investments and Innovation; (2) Academic Entrepreneurship and Applied/Experiential Learning; (3) Applied Research and Dissemination; and (4) Leadership, Community and Global Development.

All of the programs and research efforts spearheaded by the CLC have a focus on underserved and vulnerable populations and on community development. Its portfolio of programs targets children from infancy through college and family members; individuals that participate in the CLC’s leadership and professional development programs; local children, families, and schools; graduate and undergraduate students through the facilitation of internships and experiential/applied learning opportunities; and university faculty through academic programs and research efforts.

**Core Units:**

**Early Learning Research Academy:** The Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) is a state-of-the-art service and research unit center that provides early childhood education to 316 infants, toddlers and preschoolers in Camden City. ELRA goes beyond a traditional early childhood program by emphasizing dual-language learning, literacy and writing and by offering comprehensive health services to families.

- **Infant & Toddler Development Program** for 56 children age 8-weeks to 3-years old. The I/T Program uses a dual-language “World at their Fingertips” curriculum developed by Bright Horizons, Inc.
- **Preschool Program** for 260 children age 3-years to 5-years old. The Preschool Program features a dual-language creative curriculum and is part of the Camden Board of Education’s Early Childhood program. Through ELRA, children strengthen their cognitive, social and emotional skills and are given a critical head start on kindergarten. ELRA is part of the Rutgers/LEAP Birth-to-College Educational Pipeline which sets children on the path to college.

**Rutgers/LEAP Centers of Excellence:** The Rutgers/LEAP Centers of Excellence are school-based health and educational services designed to provide holistic support for the students, families, and staff of the LEAP Academy University Charter School. LEAP Academy is a K-12 charter public school system serving over 1,700 students and their families on Cooper Street in downtown Camden, an area known as the Education Corridor.

The Centers support a variety of programs and transfers university expertise to enhance the school's academic program and provide linkages and the academic capacity to offer on-site medical care and counseling, parent training, intensive college awareness programming, professional development and curricular innovations in STEM and other disciplines. Together, these programs make LEAP Academy more than just a school — they transform it into a community hub of learning, health, partnership, and development.

**Leadership, Community and Global Development:** The CLC develops, oversees and evaluates a portfolio of programs geared at building human capacity through targeted professional development and through the leverage of new academic programs targeting special populations. Its reach has extended globally through work in other countries.

**Research and Dissemination:** The CLC is committed to leading and hosting research projects that are applied and have the potential to contribute to the body of knowledge that can extend the analysis and scholarship within its core focus areas. Opportunities are created for dissemination through lectures, symposia, conferences and publications.

**CLC Research Priorities:** The CLC's research interests rest in inquiry relevant to children, families, schools and community development, with emphasis on vulnerable communities, fragile families and children living in risky environments, both locally and globally. Urban community development and the role of anchor institutions (particularly institutions of higher education) is of paramount interest, as well as the documentation of effective school practices to establish successful educational pipelines for minority students. The commitment is to learn from and improve practice, while influencing and informing policy that can impact school and community development in vulnerable communities.

The CLC and ELRA welcome research that involves active data collection initiated, coordinated, and conducted by individual investigators. Such research may be observational, correlational, or experimental in nature. Such research may also combine investigator-collected data with data available in the CLC/ELRA Longitudinal Archival Data Repository. Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method studies are welcome. Given the ongoing process of CLC staff collecting and analyzing data for dissemination, the CLC Director and/or other research associates in the staff participate as PI's or Co-PI's in research work at the CLC and staff (both program and research) are involved with the implementation of research activities. This protects the integrity of the work and ensuring that everyone who is working with families and children at the CLC is aligned with the priorities and protocols used for working with our children and families, as well as with programmatic priorities. The CLC limits the number of active research projects taking place at the same time to preserve the integrity of both the research and its educational programming. The number of active research projects at any given time depends on the nature of the projects and the extent of involvement of CLC children and staff.

**Research Proposal and Review Process:** All research conducted at the CLC/ELRA must be proposed to and approved by the Director of the CLC and the team of program and research staff. All potential investigators are required to follow the process outlined below. CLC staff is available to discuss or solicit input on proposed projects (e.g., to design a study that best fits within the CLC/ELRA context). Proposals that involve the LEAP Academy are presented to the CLC and once reviewed, they are discussed by the school's Curriculum Committee and must be approved by the school's Board of Trustees. For further information or specific questions, feel free to send an email for Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago at [gloriab@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:gloriab@camden.rutgers.edu).

**1. CLC/ELRA Research Proposals and Required Materials: To propose a research project, investigators must submit 2 initial documents:**

**(a) a completed CLC/ELRA Research Proposal Form (see Appendix A) and;**

**(b) a signed copy of the CLC/ELRA Research Guidelines Agreement (see Appendix B).**

**Investigators will need to submit:**

**(c) an approved IRB application; and if necessary,**

**(d) a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

On the CLC/ELRA Research Proposal Form, potential investigators briefly outline the research they wish to conduct, in terms of purpose, method, data collected/utilized, and potential results/implications; and the clarity of the involvement of CLC/ELRA staff/administration in the research process (if any). Investigators must also indicate whether archival research and/or active research is proposed and must also provide a concise research statement which will be used for the CLC/ELRA website and/or other documentation. The Research Proposal Form is available in Appendix A.

The Research Guidelines provide requirements and expectations concerning research at CLC/ELRA. The Research Guidelines Agreement acknowledges that investigators have read and agreed to abide by these guidelines. Investigators must sign and scan the Research Guidelines Agreement (available in Appendix B and on the CLC website), and include this signed copy when submitting the Research Proposal Form.

Before research commences, investigators must also submit an approved IRB letter. No research will begin until the approved IRB letter is received.

**2. Proposal Due Dates and Review:** Research Proposals are accepted on an ongoing basis. Review of proposals is largely for the purposes of (a) maintaining human subjects protections for CLC/ELRA children, families, and staff, (b) ensuring that CLC/ELRA can feasibly accommodate the proposed research (e.g., sufficient availability of participants, no competing research at the same time), and (c) cataloging the research conducted at

CLC/ELRA. Proposals are expected to be of high quality. When reviewing proposals, the CLC/ELRA Review Team may consider the significance and methodological integrity of the proposed research. The latter will be weighed more heavily when constrained time and resources limit the number of active research projects that can be conducted within the same timeframe.

- 3. Research and Grant Funded Requests:** Projects that are included in grant applications are welcome. As part of the research partnership, CLC/ELRA staff will collaborate with the grant PI to ensure that various costs to be incurred by the project are included in the budget and that background information is provided accordingly, as well as any letters of support. As a matter of procedure, grant proposals will require the CLC Faculty Director and administrative staff to be included as Co-PI's to ensure ongoing collaboration and reciprocity.

## **Conducting Research with CLC/ELRA Archival or Longitudinal Data**

### **Accessing CLC/ELRA Archival or Longitudinal Data**

When a proposal to conduct research using CLC archival data or a request to use data for research purposes are approved, the investigator will receive instructions for obtaining the data. In some cases, a password protected dataset may be emailed to the investigator. In other cases, the investigator may be given a password and instructions for downloading the file from a secure website.

### **Restrictions on Use of CLC/ELRA Archival/Longitudinal Data**

CLC/ELRA archival/longitudinal data may be used for the proposed and approved purposes only. If investigators wish to conduct additional studies using obtained datasets, they must submit additional proposals as outlined above.

Investigators are not permitted to share CLC/ELRA archival/longitudinal data outside the scope for which the proposal was approved.

### **Destruction of CLC/ELRA Archival/Longitudinal Data**

Upon completion of research using CLC/ELRA archival/longitudinal data, the investigator will permanently destroy their copies of related data files.

### **Confidentiality and Security of Data**

Investigators and research staff must adhere to the highest standards regarding data confidentiality and security. Investigators with approved archival research proposals agree not to make any efforts to identify individuals whose data is included in the Longitudinal Archival Data Repository. In cases in which linking archival data to

actively collected data is necessary, investigators are required to seek explicit permission for such procedures in their IRB application and obtain participant consent to do so.

## **Conducting Active Research at CLC/ELRA**

Investigators conducting research at the CLC/ELRA are reminded that they are *guests*, as the primary mission of the CLC and all of its units is to provide education and support to children and families. Investigators and any research staff are expected to abide by all CLC/ELRA policies, including those described below.

### **Standards for Behavior and Dress**

All members of the CLC/ELRA community, including investigators and research staff, are expected to serve as role models for the children enrolled in the program. As such, all persons are expected to exhibit model behavior and demonstrate respect for others.

Investigators and research staff should be mindful of their attire when at CLC/ELRA and wear professional, yet comfortable, attire. Body parts should remain covered. The CLC reserves the right to ask to change clothes before entering the facility, if necessary.

### **Background Check Policy**

All investigators and research staff physically visiting CLC/ELRA to collect data must have completed background checks on file with the CLC.

For all investigators and research staff, background check requirements include: FBI Clearance, CARI, and photocopy of photo identification badge (CLC can provide a badge). Persons must have their badge visible at all time while in the center.

### **Working with Children**

All investigators/research staff who will work with children must first visit the classroom to allow the children to become familiar with them. Investigators should work with CLC/ELRA staff to meet this requirement. As much as possible, investigators/research staff working with children will be matched with a staff member and must remain with the child(ren) at all times. At no time should a child be left alone.

Investigators are encouraged to consult with the CLC/ELRA Director, should they require space for working alone with children. The ELRA building has dedicated observation rooms with recording equipment in classrooms. Other specialized needs can be discussed with the CLC Director.

### **Facility Entry and Security**

CLC/ELRA and LEAP are locked facilities. A security officer is present during operating hours. Visitors should use the main entrance to gain entry to the facility.

Investigators and research staff requiring after-hours access will need to make special arrangements with the CLC administration.

All visitors, including investigators and staff, must sign in and out at the front desk. Visitors are not permitted to leave the facility with children.

### **Research During Operating Hours**

The CLC operating hours are 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday. The CLC is a year-round program and is closed for holidays and professional development days.

Active research at the CLC that involves disrupting the regular classroom schedule (e.g., child assessments, push in or pull out intervention) may only be conducted during particular times

Investigators/research staff should contact the CLC Director to schedule times for conducting active research. A research schedule and list of participating children should be provided to the teachers of children involved in the research.

### **Consent Forms**

Parents of children at ELRA or LEAP understand that the programs may involve research activities. Upon enrollment parents sign a general consent form. However, an additional consent form is required with specific information on particular research projects. Investigators should take care to ensure that consent forms are written clearly and concisely, avoiding technical language and completed in English and Spanish. We recommend that consent forms are written at an approximately fourth-grade reading level to accommodate the diverse population served by CLC/ELRA and LEAP and be as close to 1-2 pages in length as feasible.

### **Child Verbal Assent**

In addition to consent, assent must be obtained when conducting research directly with children. Given children's ages, formal verbal assent as defined by IRB is not required. However, no child should be forced to participate in research activities. Investigators and research staff must respect a child's refusal to participate. Investigators are encouraged to speak with CLC staff when refusal issues arise.

### **Use of CLC Resources**

Investigators should not use CLC/ELRA resources to support their research (e.g., photocopying research materials, asking educators to take on research responsibilities). All research needs should be met by the investigator's home department or other arrangements. Tasking teachers or other staff with obligations outside their regular work day/normal responsibilities may be considered use of CLC resources; investigators considering such research are encouraged to discuss such projects with the CLC Director

and may be asked to provide relevant letters of agreement and/or compensation regarding such activities.

### **Information for those who wish to have voice or personal image recording of children and/or adults**

You will need to get permission if your project requires you to take photos, videos or record voices of children or adults. Those wanting visual images or voice recordings to study must make this clear in the research proposal and specifically ask for parental permission. If you wish to make a film for a class or professional use you will need to get parental permission and submit an Application for Recording (Video, Photo and/or Audio) available in Appendix C. In the case that you need this consent, our staff will facilitate with your research team. You will also need written consent from any adults you wish to be filmed, photographed or interviewed for a voice recording.

### **Information for classroom observations**

We are happy to have you participate in an observation protocol. However, it is important that you follow proper guidelines. Prior to coming you may find our website helpful for getting background information about our programs and approaches. The following are some general guidelines:

- Please do not take photos, or record a child or children with any electronic or video device without prior permission.
- Information gathered during your observation is confidential. Please do not discuss your observations of the children in public spaces where anonymity might be compromised. When writing or speaking about the children observed, please identify them by a pseudonym, such as their first initial or a made up identifier.
- Dress casually and neatly. Dress knowing that you will be with young children in a school where paint and clay are frequently used. You may also observe while the children are outside and you should have on clothing that will keep you comfortable for 45 minutes or more.
- On the day you are scheduled to observe, please arrive on time. If you will be delayed or unable to attend, call our main number at 856-225-6348.
- Please sign-in as a visitor and a member of the staff will bring you to meet the teacher in whose classroom you will start your observing.
- When we know the goals of your observation, we will show you our observation windows, suggest a place in the classroom to sit apart from activities, or put you with a group, so you may be a participant observer engaged in activities.

- During your observing time, the head teachers will be busy with the children, supervising teaching assistants or speaking with parents. They may not be able to speak with you for more than a moment. If you would like to clarify something, please keep this brief. Please arrange with our office staff to conduct an interview.

## **Dissemination of CLC/ELRA Research**

Investigators conducting research at the CLC/ELRA agree to a number of parameters concerning the documentation and dissemination of research findings. These include acknowledging CLC/ELRA in all research products, documenting all research products, and disseminating findings to the CLC/ELRA community. On collaborative efforts, CLC/ELRA faculty and staff will serve as co-authors on publications and co-presenters at conferences and other academic gatherings.

### **Protection of Research Participants**

Investigators are required to protect the privacy of the families, children and staff. Hence, no mention of them is permitted in any of the research products.

### **Dissemination to CLC/ELRA Community**

At the conclusion of the research, investigators must submit to the CLC Director and staff team a 2-page executive summary (double space, 12 point font). The 2-page executive summary of the research should include the project title, names of investigators, begin and end date for the research, and sections describing the Purpose, Method, Results, and Implications. The executive summary will be used to document the research that is conducted at CLC/ELRA and portions may be extracted as “research highlights” for the newsletter and/or website.



## Appendix A

### Research Proposal Form

**Submission Date:**

**Investigator Information**

**Name:**

**Affiliation (Department/University):**

**Email Address:**

**Phone:**

**Status (faculty, student, other):**

**Provide the names, affiliations, and contact information for other faculty or investigators:**

**Provide the names, affiliations, and contact information for any students participating:**

**Title of Proposed Project:**

**Project design/method:**

**Purpose and research aims/questions:**

**Expected findings and implications:**

**Concise research statement (<150 words indicating purpose, method, implications for website description):**

**Articulate specific data, access and space needs:**

**Anticipated start date:**

**Anticipated end date:**

**IRB Status:**

**Is there funding available? (If yes, please describe your sources of funding)**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CLC Director

**Appendix B**  
**CLC Research Guidelines Agreement**

I have read the CLC/ELRA Research Guidelines. I agree to abide by these policies, as well as relevant policies set forth by the Rutgers University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Institutional Review Board, and CLC/ELRA administration. Moreover, I assume responsibility for ensuring that any additional investigators and/or staff involved in the current research project will also abide by these policies.

I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the policies concerning dissemination of the CLC/ELRA based research. I will acknowledge the contribution of CLC/ELRA in all products, report all products stemming from the research, submit a 2-page executive summary, and, if requested, lead discussion of research findings.

Title of Research Project/Study (please print):

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Investigator/Student Name (please print):

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Investigator/Student Email (please print):

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Investigator/Student Signature:

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Investigator/Student Phone:

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Date:

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Approved \_\_\_\_\_

CLC Director

**Required for student researchers:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Research Advisor Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Research Advisor Email (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Research Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Research Advisor Phone

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

***Sign, scan, and submit this page with completed CLC Research Proposal Form to [gloriab@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:gloriab@camden.rutgers.edu)***

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

CLC Director

## Appendix C

### Application for Recording (Video, Photo and/or Audio)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Brief Description of Purpose: (a copy of the full proposal should be enclosed)
  
2. Is there any funding provided for the production/recording? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
Source \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Requested dates for recording at the CLC \_\_\_\_\_
4. Description of planned activities:
  
  
5. Amount of time required per subject/group \_\_\_\_\_
  
  
6. Number of subjects needed \_\_\_\_\_  
Characteristics of subjects (ages, gender, home language spoken, race, etc.)
  
  
7. Special requirements (These include the kind of cooperation needed of a staff member, change of daily routine, need to leave CLC, etc.):
  
  
8. Expected date of delivery of a review copy of the recording \_\_\_\_\_

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

CLC Director