

NSABB Working Group on Personnel Reliability: Optimal Personnel Characteristics

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Group on Personnel Reliability*



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NSABB Personnel Reliability Charge

- **Recommend to the USG strategies for enhancing personnel reliability (PR) among individuals with access to biological select agents and toxins**
- **Overarching question: What is the optimal framework for ensuring PR in a manner that balances the needs for both biosecurity and continued progress in the life sciences?**
- **To address these aims, the NSABB will consider:**
 - **Extant frameworks for PR**
 - **Features of an optimal PR program**
 - **Risks and benefits associated with PR programs**
 - **Metrics for evaluating PR programs**



Working Group Established

Voting Members

- Dennis Kasper (Chair)
- Arturo Casadevall
- Murray Cohen
- Barry Erlick
- Susan Ehrlich
- Claire Fraser-Liggett
- Mike Imperiale
- Paul Keim
- Stan Lemon
- David Relman
- Andrew Sorensen
- Anne Vidaver

Agency Representatives

- FBI
- OGC
- State Dept.
- Dept. of Defense
- OSTP
- NIH
- DHS
- EPA
- USDA
- ODNI
- DHHS
- CDC
- Dept. of Energy
- Intelligence Community



Working Group Approach

- **Working Group Briefings**
 - **CDC Select Agent Program**
 - **Dept. of Defense (Army Biological Personnel Reliability Program)**
 - **Dept. of Energy (Select Agent Human Reliability Program)**
 - **NIH Intramural Research Program**
 - **CDC Intramural Research Program**
 - **Intelligence Community (Security clearances)**
 - **Battelle Biomedical Research Center**
 - **Classified briefing by intelligence community**
 - **Experts in psychological assessments**
 - **Galveston National Laboratory, BSL-4 facility at UTMB**



Key Considerations

- **A robust and agile select agent research program is critically important for public health and security**
- **The “insider threat” is real and steps should be taken to mitigate risk**
- **The current Select Agent Program includes some personnel reliability measures that can be built upon or strengthened**
- **A one-size-fits-all approach to personnel reliability may not be appropriate for all research sectors**
- **Certain features of a PR program may be best implemented at the local level (in accordance with Federal guidance)**



Vision of an Optimal PRP

- **Personnel approved for access to select agents and toxins are behaving in a responsible and trustworthy manner that upholds public health and safety, national security, and the integrity of the scientific enterprise**



Guiding Principles for an Optimal PRP

1. **Importance of research on select agents**
2. **Role of personnel reliability programs**
3. **Need for balance**
4. **Personal responsibility**
5. **A culture of mindful trust**
6. **Public trust**
7. **Communication and transparency**
8. **Need for periodic evaluation**
9. **Engaged leadership**
10. **Ongoing monitoring**
11. **Fairness and flexibility**
12. **Privacy and confidentiality**
13. **Adequate training**



Aims of an Optimal PRP

- **To mitigate the risks of theft, loss, and intentional or accidental release of select agents and toxins by individuals approved for access to select agents**
- **To accomplish this in a manner that does not impede the progress of science**



Applicability of an Optimal PRP

- **To all individuals requiring unescorted access to select agents and toxins**
- **To all individuals subject to a Security Risk Assessment under the Select Agent Rules**



Identification of Optimal Personnel Characteristics

- **Framework for developing personnel reliability program features**
 - **Identify characteristics that generally underlie trustworthy, responsible and reliable behavior**
 - **Identify ways to assess these characteristics**



Optimal Personnel Characteristics

- **Free of felony convictions**
- **No domestic or international terrorist ties**
- **No history of scientific or professional misconduct in the workplace**
- **Emotionally stable and capable of sound judgment**
- **A positive attitude toward safety and security measures, and standard operating procedures**
- **Free of vulnerability to coercion**

Assessment of Optimal Personnel Characteristics

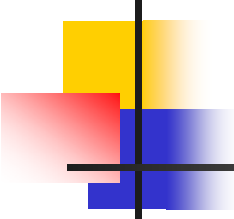
Federal-level Assessments

- Criminal history
- Potential terrorist ties

Local-level assessments

- History of scientific and professional misconduct
- Emotional stability and sound judgment
- Attitude toward safety, security, and SOPs
- Vulnerability to coercion

**Determination of
Personnel Reliability**



Today's Panels on Optimal Characteristics

Panel II

- No history of scientific or professional misconduct in the workplace
- A positive attitude toward safety and security measures, and standard operating procedures

Panel III

- Free of vulnerability to coercion
- Emotionally stable and capable of sound judgment