

# California Breast Cancer Research Program Special Research Initiatives Conflict of Interest Statement

The California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP) is committed to avoiding both actual and perceived conflicts of interest in our Special Research Initiatives, our five-year effort to investigate the effects of the environment on breast cancer and the reasons why some groups of women are more likely to get breast cancer or die from the disease. Avoiding conflicts of interest is especially important because our funding source is public tax revenue, which the California Legislature has entrusted to the University of California.

During the two-year planning process to select the most promising collaborative research on the questions being considered under the Special Research Initiatives, the CBCRP is seeking advice from a variety of experts. Some of those with the most expertise may later be considered for funding to conduct Special Research Initiative investigations. The CBCRP is committed to a process that allows us to tap the expertise of research leaders, without allowing their input to unfairly shape the Special Research Initiatives in a way that makes them, or their research facility, more likely to later receive funding.

The term “**conflict of interest**” means any financial or other interest which conflicts with the service of the individual because it (1) could significantly impair the individual’s objectivity or (2) could create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization. “Conflict of interest” means something more than individual bias. There must be an *interest*, ordinarily financial, that could be directly affected. The CBCRP is employing a variety of mechanisms to minimize the potential for conflicts throughout the process of selecting investigations to be conducted under our Special Research Initiatives. These include:

**Transparency: All Conflicts of Interest Documented in Writing.** The CBCRP is recruiting experts to serve on a variety of advisory committees that will shape future Special Research Initiatives investigations. All individuals selected are highly qualified, with knowledge, training, and experience – often highly specialized – to properly address the tasks assigned. The CBCRP identifies these individuals by drawing upon a vast network of national and international contacts and resources. It is not in the best interests of the Special Research Initiatives to bar individuals with specific interest in the issues being considered. In fact, those individuals are important to the ultimate success of the Special Research Initiatives. For this reason, the CBCRP is requiring all individuals invited to serve in any capacity to complete a **Conflict of Interest Questionnaire** declaring conflicts of interest as well as bias and positions taken related to the Special Research Initiatives. CBCRP staff and Special Research Initiatives Steering Committee members will review and discuss the questionnaires; members of the public can receive copies on request.

**Experts with No Chance of Receiving Funds Involved.** Only California researchers and institutions will be eligible to receive research funding under the Special Research

Initiatives. However, the Special Research Initiatives advisory committees will include a balance of experts from within and outside California. The goal is to recruit individuals who offer very important differences and distinctions within their fields of expertise. This will ensure a fair process, as well as the best possible product.

**Final Funding Recommendations Made by Those With No Conflicts of Interest.**

Throughout the process of deciding how best to focus Special Research Initiative funding, the Special Research Initiative Steering Committee retains maximum control over the development of recommendations. Steering Committee members must be experts from outside California or, if they are from California, they must have no interest in receiving future funding through the Special Research Initiatives. Steering Committee members will have no financial interest in the outcome and will be barred from receiving any funding from the CBCRP for two years. The Steering Committee will present its recommendations for final adoption, modification and approval to the CBCRP's highest advisory body, the Breast Cancer Research Advisory Council. The council has its own long-standing safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest. These include a ban on any member, or spouse or child of a member, receiving any compensation from a grant or contract from the CBCRP during the member's term, or throughout the following yearly grant cycle.

We believe these steps ensure a balanced and fair process while making maximum use of the specific expertise and knowledge of individuals inside and outside California.