



May 18, 2018

Statement on the Council of Councils Working Group Report on Assessing the Safety of Relocating Chimpanzees

I want to thank the [Council of Councils Working Group on Assessing the Safety of Relocating At-Risk Chimpanzees](#) for their thoughtful [report](#) on factors to be considered by veterinary staff when deciding to relocate at-risk NIH-owned and -supported chimpanzees. At-risk chimpanzees are those that, due to physical or behavioral impairment, are more likely to experience one or more severe adverse events because of the relocation or resocialization process. Relocation and resocialization are major stress-inducers in all chimpanzees and can be particularly risky for older chimpanzees. The process of preparing animals for transfer, the transfer itself, and the process of introducing animals to a new environment including new social groups are all critical factors in ensuring their welfare. Ultimately, NIH's goal is to retire its chimpanzees to the Federal Sanctuary System operated by Chimp Haven, Inc., in Keithville, Louisiana.

The Council of Council recommendations will be issued for public comment in the Federal Register in the coming weeks. NIH will consider the Council of Council recommendations and public comments to inform a plan for relocating at-risk chimpanzees to Chimp Haven with health and welfare as primary determinants.

In 2015, NIH [made the policy decision](#) to end the use of chimpanzees in NIH-supported research. Today, half of NIH-owned chimpanzees have been relocated to the Federal Sanctuary System. The remaining NIH-owned chimpanzees are at the Keeling Center for Comparative Medicine and Research, Bastrop, Texas, and the Alamogordo Primate Facility, New Mexico. NIH also supports chimpanzees owned by Southwest National Primate Research Center, in San Antonio, Texas. Importantly, all chimpanzees are socially housed with inside and outside accommodations, large climbing structures, and an environment that enables the animals to exhibit species-specific behaviors. Each facility that houses NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees has highly trained staff, many of whom have decades of experience relocating chimpanzees, including veterinarians with specialization in primate medicine to address chimpanzee health concerns.

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