DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
South Texas Veterans Health Care System
San Antonio, Texas 78229-4404

Research Service Policy Memorandum 16-21

February 1, 2016

RESEARCH STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)
Laboratory Security

1. **PURPOSE:** Ensure laboratory security procedures are implemented consistently and define key roles, procedures, and responsibilities.

2. **POLICY:** Research Service will maintain a service level program to insure security of research laboratory areas. Access to research laboratories is limited to authorized individuals. VA Research laboratories are closed to the public. Research Service procedures supplement South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) security management plan.

3. **ACTION:**

a. **Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development** is the responsible official for providing secure research laboratory areas. The Administrative Officer (AO) will be the contact point for requesting access (x15538).

b. **Principal Investigators and Laboratory Supervisors:**

(1) Initiate working without compensation (WOC) appointments for all non-VA salaried personnel prior to starting work.

(2) Review security policies with staff.

(3) Ensure laboratory workers and visitors are trained, understand security requirements, and follow established procedures.

(4) Requests for employee laboratory access are limited to required work areas only.

c. **All Employees:**

(1) Must understand security requirements and follow established procedures.

(2) Question and report the presence of unfamiliar individuals in the laboratories and report all suspicious activity immediately to the VA Police Service, at extension 15911 and to the Administrative Officer at extension 15538.

(3) Must not provide laboratory access to unfamiliar individuals.

(4) Must not allow unauthorized personnel to follow them into the laboratory areas through doors upon entry. Refer them to the Research Service Administrative Office.

(5) Must immediately report any building security problem to Police and the AO.

(6) Must not borrow or loan laboratory access badges.

d. **Administrative Officer:**

(1) Accompany Police Service representative conducting annual review of Security Program to assess training, compliance, and security issues, etc.

(2) Will request employee access from the Police. Areas of access are listed from Research 1 to Research 15.

(3) Will update, add, or remove employees from the Research access list as needed or requested.

(4) Will review security access logs from Police Service.

e. **Police Service:**

(1) Will conduct annual security vulnerability /risk assessments and act as a resource to Research in the creation and monitoring of security policies. Additionally, Police Service will monitor security compliance by regularly walking through secured areas.

(2) Provide an electronic listing to the AO of all personnel entering and leaving the Research areas. The listing will be sent to research at least quarterly.

f. **Laboratory Access:**

(1) Laboratory will be locked at all times (24 hours, 7 days a week). This will be accomplished by outer security doors utilizing an electronic ID card and keypad access system.

(2) Only workers required to perform a particular job are authorized in laboratory. Also, workers are authorized access only in areas and at hours required for them to perform their job. Engineering Service and Safety Service will be granted (Research 1 area) access to perform repairs, inspections and chemical removal.

(3) PIs or Laboratory Supervisors must submit an electronic written access request to the Administrative Officer indicating access areas required and reason for access. The following information is needed to request swipe access from Police Service: Name, 5-digit badge number on the back of the flash badge, expiration date of the PIV badge and research areas access is needed.

(4) The Administrative Officer, upon validating access need, will notify Police Service, via email, to enter the access into the STVHCS security access system.

(5) When an employee is departing, the responsible investigator must notify the Administrative Office personnel for instructions.

(6) Research Office will maintain records of personnel authorized access.

(7) All Visitors not having an access ID card must enter through the Research Administrative Office, sign VA Form 4793, Visitor's Log and obtain a 12-hour expiring visitor pass.

(8) Visitors are not authorized to perform any work in the laboratory area or any protocol.

(9) The visitor logs will be scanned into a Share folder file and archived indefinitely. After scanning, paper documents may be destroyed. Sign in sheets should be scanned in by groups of days. The naming convention should read as an example: "ResearchVisitorSignInLogs 01-21-2012."

(10) Visitor badges will be worn at the chest level.

(11) Visitors wearing a Research Visitor badge must be accompanied by a VA or approved WOC employee at all times while in the secured research areas/labs.

(12) All Research sticker visitor badges must be returned to the Research office before departing the facility or make prior arrangements with the Research Office to drop off the sticker badge. Also the research visitor must sign out on the visitor log they signed in on.

g. **Laboratories:**

(1) Are to be secured when personnel are not present.

(2) Post on the outer door a list of names and contact numbers in the event of an emergency.

h. **Authorization:**

(1) All individuals involved in STVHCS research must have either a VA salaried appointment or a WOC appointment authorizing them to work within the facility.

(2) Individuals planning to work within a Research laboratory area must request their WOC appointments and application packets through Research Service Administrative Office.

(3) Human Resources Management Service will fingerprint, initiate background investigations, issue the WOC appointment approval memo, and request ID card.

(4) Upon notification from the investigator that a VA employee or WOC employee is leaving, the Research Office will initiate the departure clearance (ePAS) notice to cancel flash ID card access.

(5) Vendors/contractors are restricted from lab areas unless they receive approval from the Administrative Officer or ACOS for Research, sign in and obtain a visitor badge from a Research staff member. Service contractors arriving to perform repairs, calibration or services on equipment should have already made arrangement for these services with a point of contract within Research such as the AO. A purchase order number should be validated prior to allowing services to be performed on equipment.

(6) Identification Cards. All persons within STVHCS VA facility must wear a clearly visible VA identification badge at all times. VA identification cards should always be worn above the waste and not at or below the beltline.

4. REFERENCES: VHA Handbook 1200.06 & 1200.08, Appendix E; VA Handbook 0710 (see subpar. 7c (2)); 42 CFR 73.10, 7 CFR 331.10 or 9 CFR 121.10.

5. RESPONSIBILITY: ACOS for Research and Development

6. RECISSIONS: Research Service Memorandum 12-21, November 16, 2012

7. RECERTIFICATION: January 2021

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