POLICY NUMBER: S-005

Title: Visitors in Research Laboratories and Research Support Areas with Controlled Access

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define a policy for visitors that enter VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) research laboratory settings or research support areas. The term “research laboratory” in this policy includes the wet laboratories that require employees/staff to use an ID-card or keys to gain access. The term “research support area” in this policy indicates common use spaces such as the room that contains the ice machine and the sterilizer or the room that contains the water filtration system.

2.0 Revision History

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>R&amp;D Committee Approval Date</th>
<th>Revision Number</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 28, 2017</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Removed the word escort; requests approved by ACOS/Deputy ACOS; visitor requirements for VA Police Services; prohibition of pictures and/or videos</td>
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<td>Section 3.0</td>
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<td>Section 5.5</td>
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<td>March 22, 2016</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>None.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 26, 2015</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Consistent listing of research support area; minor clarifications to wording in document and title.</td>
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<td>Entire document</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 26, 2013</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>New Policy</td>
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3.0 Definitions

**Visitor** – A visitor is considered to be any person who enters a research laboratory, research support area, or other potentially hazardous space upon the express or implied invitation of the laboratory’s Principal Investigator (PI), lab manager or his/her staff. The VAPHS has an obligation to ensure all visitors are escorted throughout the VAPHS Medical Center.
Visitors do NOT include:

1. Employees, fellows and students of the VAPHS Medical Center authorized to participate in one or more approved Research and Development (R&D) protocols.

2. A consultant or other non-VAPHS faculty, staff or student registered as an authorized agent or guest and approved for work on a specific IACUC or IBC approved protocol.

3. An outside vendor or a VAPHS employee not otherwise approved on a specific IBC or IACUC-approved protocol but authorized by the facility for the purpose of facility maintenance, certification, or inspection.

**Authorized Guide** is the person that invites the visitor. This person makes arrangements for visitors to enter into research laboratories or research support areas. The Authorized Guide must be a VA Research employee who is authorized to access the laboratory space(s) where the visitor will enter.

### 4.0 Introduction

Laboratory research often involves potentially hazardous and regulated materials, such as biological and chemical agents, toxins, and radioisotopes, as well as potentially hazardous equipment. For this reason, regular access to VAPHS research laboratories and research support areas is restricted to authorized laboratory personnel whose presence is part of their normal work, supervised research or coursework, or is a consequence of normal interaction and collaboration.

Employees, students, and individuals from other academic or research institutions, business organizations, other governmental agencies, and vendors may visit VAPHS research laboratories and research support areas on a short term, infrequent basis provided that there is a business or educational purpose for the visit. PI’s and laboratory directors are responsible for making appropriate arrangements for such visits based on considerations of safety and non-disruption of research activities; these individuals may deny access to non-authorized personnel.

### 5.0 Policy

5.1 An Authorized Guide must notify the Associate Chief of Staff for Research (ACOS/R&D) and the Deputy ACOS/R&D that they will be bringing a visitor into research laboratory space. The Authorized Guide must provide the ACOS/R&D and Deputy ACOS/R&D with the visitor’s name, the reason for the visit, the rooms to be visited, and the estimated length of the visit by email or in writing **at least 24 hours** in advance of the visit. The ACOS/R&D or the Deputy ACOS/R&D will inform the Authorized Guide if the visitor is approved to enter the Research area.

5.2 Visitors entering VAPHS research laboratories or research support areas must be under the direct supervision of the Authorized Guide at all times. Prior to entry, the visitor must be informed of the potential hazards to which they may be exposed while in the laboratory, as well as any appropriate
precautions the visitor must take to protect themselves. A briefing should be provided regarding activities that are currently underway in the laboratory, what to do in case of an emergency, and exit routes. Under some circumstances, visitors may be asked to wear personal protective equipment appropriate for the hazards present in the laboratory or research support area. Additional access restrictions may apply to some laboratories that contain the following: animals, biohazardous agents, laser equipment or non-ionizing radiation sources, radioactive materials or radiation-producing machines, and human subject research.

5.3 Visitors must immediately report to the VA Police Service upon entry onto the VAPHS University Drive campus. Visitors will be issued a visitor badge when they sign into the facility.

5.4 PI’s and laboratory managers are responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy.

5.5 Visitors not in compliance with the requirements outlined above will be prohibited from entering VAPHS research laboratories or research support areas. If a visitor fails to adhere to the above requirements once inside VAPHS research laboratories or research support areas, they will be removed from the space immediately.

5.6 Visitors shall not be permitted to take still photographs or videos unless prior approval has been granted by the ACOS/R&D and the PI that occupies the space. This includes the use of cell phones for these purposes.

5.7 Minors are NOT permitted in VAPHS research laboratories or research support areas.

5.8 Pets are NOT permitted in VAPHS research laboratories or research support areas.

//signed copy on file //

Gretchen L. Haas, PhD
Research and Development Committee Chair

//signed copy on file //

Steven H. Graham, MD, PhD
Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development