SUBJECT: Research Space Assignments

1. **PURPOSE:**

   The purpose of this SOP is to outline the processes for managing space and employee moves within the Research Service.

2. **DEFINITIONS:**

   AO/R: Administrative Officer for Research
   ACOS/R: Associate Chief of Staff for Research
   CTC: Clinical Trials Center (3Q)
   IACUC: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
   ICC: Integrated Care Community
   IRB: Institutional Review Board
   PI: Principal Investigator
   R&D: Research and Development
   RDC: Research and Development Committee
   SRS: Subcommittee on Research Safety
   VA Research: Research conducted by VA investigators (serving on compensated, work without compensation (WOC), or Intergovernmental Personnel Agreement (IPA) appointments) while on VA time, utilizing VA resources (e.g., equipment), or on VA property including space leased to, or used by VA. The research may be funded by VA, by other sponsors, or be unfunded.
   Active Research Funding: A competitive award from VA or another extramural organization that is within the initial performance period. Active research funding can be counted in our RDIS report and generates VERA funding for the VA. Residual or carryover funds are not considered to be active research funding as they are not reportable in RDIS and do not generate VERA funds.

3. **OVERVIEW:**

   This SOP is created to allow for space management within the research service line. Given the frequent changes in research priorities, funding, staffing, methodologies, space availability, space needs, etc., this SOP aims to promote equity across all studies. This SOP also establishes that research space is provided temporarily, and the criteria upon which it is provided and rescinded.

4. **PROCEDURES:**

   a) **Assignment of Space in Research:** All space within research department is assigned based on need as determined by the ACOS, Deputy ACOS, Research Nurse Manager, and/or Veterinary Medical Officer and Center Directors, where appropriate. The needs of individual Investigators and of the Research Service as a whole will be considered when assigning, reassigning, or reclaiming space. Assignment of space is dependent on duration and scope of research projects, current research funding, specific unique needs of funded research grants, and needs of other investigators and research staff.

      i) Investigators with an RDC-approved research protocol are eligible to request space within the Research wings. Priority is given to investigators with active research funding.

      ii) Office space in Research areas, inclusive of the CTC, is prioritized for investigators and paid research personnel.

          (1) VA clinician investigators who are paid by a clinical care ICC will not be assigned office space in Research areas. Exceptions are made only for clinician investigators who hold an active Career Development Award grant.

          (2) Per Research Service Telework Policy, assigned desk space is prioritized for staff who primarily work onsite. In recognition of flexible work assignments, staff working on-site less than 3 days (24 hours) per week may be asked to share assigned space or use "hoteling" (first-come, first-served unassigned desks in a shared space).

      iii) Laboratory space is assigned based on need. Unique features of specific laboratory rooms are considered to ensure that investigators have access to space adequate for their actively funded research projects. Actively funded projects that do not involve research hazards and/or do not include an active SRS protocol do not require laboratory space.

b) **Veteran-Accessible Research Areas:** Space in the Clinical Trials Center or other Veteran-accessible areas is prioritized for IRB- or RDC-approved studies involving human subjects and on research funding. As with laboratory space, use of these areas is assigned based on need.

c) **Space Reclamation/Reassignment:** Assigned space will be considered for reclamation and reassignment if one or all of the following conditions are met:

    i) Funding and/or Project Ends. When Investigator no longer maintains active research funding and/or has no active studies approved by RDC, their assigned space may be reclaimed for the use of those with active research and funding.

    ii) Staffing Levels Change. Investigators who gain or lose paid research study staff may need to increase or decrease assigned space accordingly.

    iii) Research Requirements Change. When study status changes such that the scope of research or specific unique needs of the study change, such as when a study ends human or animal subjects work and moves to data analysis only, space usage may be re-evaluated.

          (1) Example 1: Investigator assigned bench lab space is no longer funded for or conducting bench research.

          (2) Example 2: Investigator's projects required multiple spaces, however research portfolio, funding, and or staff have changed, reducing their space requirements.

d) **Union Review and Approval:** Space changes that create a bargaining obligation with a Union will follow the appropriate process for notification to the Union. If negotiation is required, the process appropriate to negotiation will be followed. If any conflict exists between a labor relations obligation and this policy, the labor relations obligation will take precedence, including in any case where an agreement is reached with the Union regarding a negotiable space change. In no way should this SOP be construed as implicating, modifying, or inhibiting the rights of the Union.

e) **Staff Notification:** Staff approved to relinquish/relocate within research space will be notified of plan to move following discharge of labor relations obligations or, if no obligation exists, upon the final decision to affect a space change.

f) **Record Retention:** The Research Office will allow Investigator and/or research staff a reasonable time to secure data, equipment, and research materials, clean out, and pack up anything necessary to relocate. Time frame is dependent on the size of the space and scope of the move, but shall not exceed 90 days. If the Investigator or research staff are unable or

unwilling to relocate, Research Office personnel will secure and relocate data, equipment, and research materials as needed.

g) **Scheduling Moves:** Investigator/Research Staff will enter Move Request through Maximo and work with Move Coordinator, VA OIT, and Movers to plan move.

h) **Space Clean Up:** Investigators and their study team are responsible for proper handling of any data, chemicals, or equipment used in their assigned space.

   i) When vacating office space, the investigator and their team will move, archive, or destroy all hard copy data files per RDC SOP RDC-016 "Research Data Requirements".

   ii) When an investigator vacates a laboratory space, the space will be cleared by the PI and their study team per applicable SRS laboratory closure SOP.

   iii) When an investigator accepts space that has not yet been cleared and cleaned, should they not wish to wait until the space is cleared, they may accept responsibility for clearing the space themselves.

i) **Conflict:** Should a conflict arise in assignment or reassignment of space, the ACOS or Deputy ACOS and affected Investigator(s) will present their argument for or against proposed changes to the R&D Committee in no more than one typed page. After reviewing the proposed changes and any objections raised by affected Investigator(s), the R&D Committee will determine an appropriate proposed resolution. Should affected Investigator(s) refuse to accept the R&D Committee's decision, per VHA Directive 1200.01 5f, the R&D Committee will recommend a course of action to the facility Director, who will make the final determination regarding the proposed change.

5. **REFERENCES:**

   VHA Directive 1200.01 "Research and Development Committee" (24 January 2021)

6. **R&D COMMITTEE APPROVAL:** 5 December 2023

7. **RESCISSIONS:** None. This is a new SOP.

8. **EXPIRATION DATE:** N/A

9. **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** Research and Development (R&D) Committee