VOLUNTEERS IN RESEARCH

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Applies to:
Any individual, aged 16 or older, who wishes to observe or assist in research (in a capacity other than a research subject) at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, regardless of the length of their volunteer experience. This policy does not apply to: UVA employees or postdoctoral fellows, or other individuals with a contractual relationship to the University; students performing research for academic credit at UVA; or clinical research subjects.

Reason for Policy:
Qualified volunteers can provide meaningful assistance in laboratory, clinical, or translational research. Our goal should always be to protect volunteers from injury or illness while serving the University without the protection of workers’ compensation. This policy outlines the conditions that must be met in order to ensure that both the individual and the institution are protected in this situation.

Policy Statement:
Anyone observing or assisting in research on behalf of the University, without receiving credit or pay from the University for these activities, is considered a volunteer. Individuals are permitted to perform volunteer research provided that they have authorization from the University. Visiting professionals who are not paid by the University also should be appointed as non-paid faculty by the responsible department for the durations of their stays.

Documentation of permission is required in the event that something occurs, such as a claim or lawsuit against the volunteer and/or the University. There must be clear documentation indicating a volunteer’s status as an agent working on behalf of the University in order for the Commonwealth to provide legal defense and insurance.
Individuals who have pending employment may not volunteer for work. This includes someone who is awaiting final visa approval or who wishes to work prior to his or her official start date. It is a violation of the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour regulations for an employee to work without compensation.

**Procedures:**

**Authorization**
Individuals who wish to serve as volunteers must request authorization by completing and receiving prior approval of a volunteer form (see link under “Related Documents”). Prospective volunteers who will work in sensitive activities must provide two references whom the department may contact before accepting that volunteer. Sensitive activities include, but are not limited to, access to equipment covered by federal export control regulations, or sensitive animal research.

**Responsibilities of faculty/staff hosts of volunteers**
Responsible faculty/staff shall:
- ensure that volunteers receive training and protective equipment appropriate to their responsibilities;
- restrict the volunteer to activities listed on the volunteer form;
- and provide direction and guidance to the volunteer as appropriate.

Questions concerning the engagement of volunteers or host responsibilities should be discussed in advance with the Office of Property & Liability Risk Management (UVA) or the Office for Research (SOM).

**Dependent family members of non-immigrant aliens**
Visas held by non-immigrant aliens restrict their employment. Unauthorized employment of such individuals violates federal law, with potential liability for both the dependent family member and the University. These individuals may not volunteer at the University for activities that normally are performed by employees.

**Completing the volunteer form**
The items below correspond to the information required on the “Form for Volunteers Participating in School of Medicine Research Activities,” which must be approved prior to the onset of work in University facilities:

1. Volunteer’s complete legal name and complete address. If his or her permanent home and local address differ, both addresses and phone numbers shall be listed.

2. Volunteers must carry personal health insurance to protect themselves against the cost of medical expenses due to injuries and illnesses that may occur. Provide the name of the volunteer’s health insurance carrier.
3. Check appropriate boxes describing the status of the volunteer. If the volunteer has a visa, attach a copy to the form.

4. Provide the volunteer’s emergency contact information.

5. Give the period that the individual is authorized to act on behalf of the University in a volunteer capacity. If this time frame changes for any reason, an updated form must be forwarded to the School of Medicine Finance Office.

6. A complete and accurate description of the volunteer’s activities is required. There should be no confusion about what the volunteer will be authorized to do on behalf of the University. Document any restrictions or limitations on the volunteer’s activities.

7. List any impairment for which the individual is requesting an accommodation and specify the accommodation requested.

8. The volunteer’s safety and health are important to the University. Supervising faculty must educate volunteers about any foreseen hazards they may encounter during their research activity. Volunteers must be instructed in the appropriate departmental and institutional safety guidelines applicable to their activities. See “Overview of Research Safety Guidelines and Necessary Training & Certification.”

The volunteer form must be signed by the department head, the faculty member responsible for the volunteer’s activities, and the volunteer. In the event that the volunteer is under 18 years of age, his or her parent or guardian must also sign. Documents must be kept on file by the department for three (3) years from the time the volunteer activity ends.

Related Documents
Form for Volunteers Participating in School of Medicine Research Activities:
Authorization of Volunteers in the Work Place (UVA policy):
https://policy.itc.virginia.edu/policy/policydisplay?id='HRM-001'

Overview of Research Safety Guidelines and Necessary Training and Certification
Any person conducting or participating in research at the University of Virginia must follow appropriate safety guidelines and obtain the necessary training and certification depending on the proposed research activities.

1. Life safety issues (i.e. location of fire exits, use of protective equipment, etc.)
2. Necessary training and certification:
   - Individuals conducting or participating in research involving vertebrate animals must have an animal research protocol approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC; http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/iacuc/) and receive appropriate training in the use of animals in research.
   - Persons having access to research subjects or data with personal identifiers must take an online confidentiality and security training on human research. See http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/.
   - Persons conducting or participating in research involving radioactive material, infectious agents, human tissues, human fluids or human blood must take training specific to those hazards. Please refer to the following website for more information: http://ehs.virginia.edu/ehs/.

3. Other appropriate departmental safety issues.

Next Scheduled Review: March 2016

Revision history:
Implemented October 8, 2002; revised 11/13/02, 12/4/06, 1/25/10, 2/14/2011, 4/16/13

Approved:

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Vice President and Dean

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