

**FAIRFAX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

**SOP NUMBER: 010  
SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**I. PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines for the conduct of research in the Sheriff's Office.

**II. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office that:

- A. Policies and procedures governing the conduct of research comply with state and federal guidelines for the use and dissemination of research findings and with accepted professional and scientific ethics.
- B. The Sheriff or Chief, Administrative Services Division, as appropriate, will review and approve all research projects in conformity with this Standard Operating Procedure prior to their implementation.
- C. Voluntary inmate participation is not precluded in nonmedical, non-pharmaceutical and non-cosmetic research programs provided research design indicates the probability that there will be no negative side effects in the program.
- D. The use of inmates in biomedical, chemical, or behavior research programs is governed by SOP 468.
- E. The use of participants for medical, pharmaceutical, or cosmetic experiments is prohibited in Community Corrections Division programs.

**III. REFERENCES**

- A. Chapter 21, Title 2.1, Code of Virginia (Virginia Freedom of Information Act).
- B. Chapter 26, Title 2.1, Code of Virginia (Virginia Privacy Protection Act of 1976).

**IV. INTRA AGENCY RESEARCH**

- A. Research designed to enhance the collection, storage, retrieval, and reporting of data via the introduction or application of advanced technological systems and/or methodology will be approved by the Sheriff.
  - 1. Prior to proposing any research project involving staff or inmate subjects, the references listed in Paragraph III preceding, will be reviewed to ensure the scope of intended research does not violate current law.
  - 2. In research projects involving staff or inmate participants, a research program proposal must be prepared and submitted which describes the nature and scope of the project. A proposal should state:
    - a. The purpose of the proposed research.
    - b. The name of the person who will conduct the project.
    - c. The procedures to be used for data collection (i.e. questionnaires, forms, tests). Samples of any instruments proposed for use in the project should accompany the proposal.

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- d. Security procedures to be implemented to protect the privacy of participants and confidentiality of data collected.
3. The Sheriff will notify the person submitting the proposal whether the project is approved, disapproved, or approved subject to modification. This notification will be in writing.
4. Upon completion of approved research projects, the results will be forwarded to the Sheriff for review prior to their use or dissemination. The Sheriff will approve, disapprove, or direct further modification and resubmission as appropriate. Upon final approval, one copy of the completed project will be forwarded to the Administrative Services Division for retention.

**V. OUTSIDE RESEARCH**

- A. Applications from agencies, firms, or individuals outside the Sheriff's Office, to conduct research involving agency personnel, policies, procedures, or inmates, must receive prior approval from the Sheriff.
- B. Outside researchers will be required to submit a written proposal outlining the nature and scope of the intended project. The content of the proposal should include:
  1. Title of proposed study or project.
  2. Name, address, and telephone number of individual conducting the research, as well as, the same information concerning other researchers involved, if any, together with relevant background experience. If the individual conducting research is a member of a consulting firm, college, university, or other organization, a separate statement should accompany the proposal indicating whether the project is being conducted under sponsorship or auspices of the firm, college, university, or agency.
  3. A brief description outlining the purpose or objective of the project and anticipated use of the findings.
  4. The nature of any agency resources which may be required during the conduct of the project. Agency resources include: staff or inmate participants; agency records, including staff, inmate, medical, classification, programs; work space; equipment, including access to office machines and file cabinets for secure storage of research data; and clerical support.
  5. Procedures to be used for data collection including copies of proposed research instruments such as questionnaires, tests and consent forms.
  6. Security procedures to be followed to protect the privacy of participants and confidentiality of data collected.
  7. Anticipated duration of the research project.
- C. After reviewing the outside research proposal, the Sheriff will notify the applicant in writing whether the project is approved, disapproved, or approved subject to modification. No outside research project will be approved if there appears to be conflict between project objectives and the references listed in Paragraph III preceding.

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**D. Conduct of approved Outside Research Projects.**

1. Outside researchers will be required to execute a research agreement form (attachment 1) prior to commencing the project.
2. A member of the agency will be assigned to monitor the research project and ensure that the research is being conducted in a professional, ethical manner, in compliance with agency policy and the law.
3. Signed consent forms (attachment 2) must be obtained from any inmate or staff member prior to their participation as subjects in any research project.
4. The researcher will be required to explain the project to potential subjects. A written summary, in layman's language will be prepared to facilitate understanding and a copy provided to each potential subject. It will be made clear to inmate subjects that their participation in any research is purely voluntary, and that their participation will, in no way, affect the term or length of their confinement.
5. Any data collected on a research participant during the course of the project will be used only in the manner described to him, and only in the manner specifically permitted by the subject subsequently. Researchers will not use subjects' correct names or describe them in such detail that they might be identified.
6. No inmate or employee of the Sheriff's Office will receive compensation, remuneration or payment of any kind from the researcher for participating in the project.
7. The researcher will be required to maintain records adequate to enable the Sheriff to ascertain the status of the project at all times.
8. Access to any data collected which concerns inmate or staff subjects will be restricted to the person conducting the project, the staff monitor, and the Sheriff.
9. All research data collected will be stored in a locked container during the course of the project.
10. The outside researcher will keep the Sheriff's Office apprised of problems encountered during the conduct of the project.
11. The Sheriff will approve final findings of the researcher prior to their publication or dissemination.
12. A copy of the final report of all research projects conducted in the agency will be provided to the Sheriff.
13. Violation of the condition under which a research project is approved will be cause for termination of the project. Violation of Sheriff's Office regulations or the confidentiality and privacy of data and data subjects may result in civil or criminal liability to the person or agency conducting the research.

**1/01/00  
DATE APPROVED  
7/01/91  
EFFECTIVE DATE**



**STACEY A. KINCAID  
SHERIFF**