PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish requirements for use of secure online data collection systems for human subject research activities (Subpart A below), and the secure transmission (Subpart B below) of data (including personally identifying information) on Virginia Tech (VT) owned or maintained computers, and computers not owned or maintained by VT.

SUBPART A: USE OF SECURE ONLINE DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Human subject research activities conducted by VT researchers involving online* solicitation of participants’ personal information (e.g., name, student ID) or anonymous data must utilize one of the following approved online services:

1. www.survey.vt.edu
2. VT Blackboard
3. Other approved service included on the list found at: http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/validated.htm
4. Other VT service (including self developed software) on a VT machine as reviewed and found secure by VT IT Security (submit a request at http://www.security.vt.edu/)
5. External services only if SSL (https://) or similar encryption is enabled on the login AND all other data collection pages. For basic guidance as to whether SSL is properly enabled on an active online survey, please visit our webpage at: http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/online.htm.

Collaborative research projects in which VT is engaged, however with minor involvement** may use other services as approved by the lead institution’s IRB. Collaborative research projects in which the principal investigator is affiliated with VT must comply with the above policy.

SUBPART B: SECURE TRANSMISSION OF DATA

Online research activities (under the purview of the VT IRB) involving the collection of sensitive data from human subjects may not collect identifying information within the same online form. Identifying information must be transmitted and stored (under encryption) separately from data.

Online research activities (under the purview of the VT IRB) involving the collection of non-sensitive data from human subjects may collect identifying information within the same online form. Identifying information may be transmitted and temporarily*** stored (under encryption) with data.

*Online human subject activities include but are not limited to the following: recruitment, enrollment, screening for eligibility, surveys, and experimental procedures.

**Minor involvement encompasses one or more of the following research activities/circumstances: data analysis, consulting investigator, and recruitment. The following activities/circumstances do not constitute minor involvement (list not exhaustive): data collection, research for which a VT individual is the principal investigator.

***Temporarily means a reasonable amount of time until data can be coded and stored separately.