



NCIRE

Northern California Institute for Research and Education, Inc.

Expectations for Principal Investigators Supervising NCIRE Employees

The following expectations provide a summary of essential information and conduct for Principal Investigators involved in the recruitment and management of NCIRE employees. It is required that you review and acknowledge with your signature these expectations annually. If there are questions or concerns contact NCIRE Human Resources at ncirehr@ncire.org.

Hiring Employees

Principal Investigators seeking to recruit employees via NCIRE are required to review the following information and to contact NCIRE Human Resources for additional guidance.

- All employees hired by NCIRE must be eligible to work in the United States.
- The Principal Investigator must have funding currently available to compensate employees.
- NCIRE employees are VA Research Without Compensation (WOC) appointees (except those on H-1B Visas) and are individuals who perform research-related duties without any direct monetary compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. NCIRE employees must complete the WOC process as part of onboarding and before starting work.

Terms of Employment and Supervision

NCIRE employees will report to a Principal Investigator who may serve as their direct or indirect supervisor. NCIRE retains the role as employer of record and assumes all associated responsibilities. It is essential to clarify that these individuals are employees of the organization, not the Principal Investigator, SFVAHCS, or UCSF. Employees are encouraged to participate in cross-training opportunities within their laboratory and to assist with other studies administered by NCIRE when required.

Principal Investigators are expected to treat all NCIRE employees with professionalism, dignity, and respect. Failure to uphold these standards, including any acts of discrimination, retaliation, or harassment, will result in immediate investigation by NCIRE Human Resources and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from projects. All substantiated findings will also be reported to the appropriate affiliate organization.

At-Will Employment

At-Will Employment means that either the employer or the employee may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and for any lawful reason. NCIRE is committed to ensuring that all employment decisions are made fairly and in compliance with applicable laws.

Unlawful reasons—such as discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristics are strictly prohibited. Employment with NCIRE is at will unless otherwise required by law or outlined in a written agreement.

Equal Employment Opportunity

NCIRE is committed to being an equal-opportunity employer and fully complies with all relevant anti-discrimination legislation. This commitment applies to all individuals involved in NCIRE's operations. Personnel decisions will be made solely on legitimate business grounds and will not be influenced by race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristics protected by law. Furthermore, NCIRE strictly prohibits discrimination based on the perception that a person possesses any of these characteristics or is associated with someone who does or is perceived to have them.

Anti-Harassment Policy

NCIRE is firmly committed to maintaining a workplace free from harassment. Harassment is defined as any unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical behavior that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile atmosphere, disrupting an individual's ability to perform their job. A hostile work environment arises when any team member contributes to conditions that are intimidating or offensive, whether on or off the premises. NCIRE's anti-harassment policy applies to all individuals involved in NCIRE's operations and explicitly prohibits unlawful harassment from any NCIRE employee, including both supervisors and coworkers, as well as from third parties. NCIRE will actively implement reasonable measures to prevent and address harassment by non-employees, including collaborators, vendors, customers, and contractors who engage with our staff in the workplace.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

At NCIRE, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policies are designed to support employees in managing their health and well-being while ensuring a productive work environment. FMLA and CFRA provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for specific family and medical reasons without fear of job loss, while ADA mandates reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities to perform their job duties effectively. If a Principal Investigator is approached by an NCIRE employee requesting time off for FMLA-related reasons or accommodations under ADA, **please reach out to Human Resources immediately for guidance and support.** It may not be immediately clear whether an employee's request relates to FMLA or ADA, but HR can assist you in identifying and addressing their needs appropriately.

Compensation and Salary Guidelines

NCIRE retains the authority to make decisions regarding recruiting, hiring, terminations, job assignments, and salary levels, in consultation with the Principal Investigator.

The following points outline our compensation policy:

- Salaries will be designed to remain competitive with similar roles in the local market and in accordance with NCIRE's Nondiscrimination Report Data.
- Compliance with minimum wage laws is mandatory for all salary determinations.
- Employees will receive pay only for hours worked after their designated start date.
- Work is prohibited prior to an employee's official start date.
- Work on VA Research may not begin until a WOC is obtained or the employee is placed on an IPA.

Employee Policies

Principal Investigators must be well-acquainted with the [NCIRE Employee Handbook](#), particularly the sections addressing employee conduct and the complaint filing process. It is essential to understand that only the CEO and Human Resources staff of NCIRE have legal authority to make decisions regarding hiring, reappointment, termination, or changes to an employee's work status or salary. Any statements or promises regarding these matters made by other personnel are not binding.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Training and Awareness are crucial in preventing workplace violence. It is strongly recommended that Principal Investigators take NCIRE's online Workplace Violence Prevention Training session to be prepared and educated on the appropriate response to a violent incident, keeping themselves and their staff safe.

As the Principal Investigator or supervisor, you are legally required to know how to react when an incident occurs. To complete the NCIRE training, contact May Ng at may.ng@ncire.org or at ext. 25202.

Legal Requirements

Principal Investigators must understand that NCIRE adheres to California Labor Law, which includes specific requirements that differ from federal regulations, particularly for those who have primarily managed employees under federal guidelines. Key distinctions include the calculation of overtime pay, which is based on hours worked over 8 in a day rather than just exceeding 40 hours in a week. Furthermore, California Law mandates that employees receive their final paycheck on their last day of employment. Failure to do this results in the employee being owed a full day's wages for each day the payment is delayed. If an employee is hired who resides outside of California, additional regulations from their home state may also need to be considered.

Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Employment

NCIRE requires pre-approval for any out-of-state employment due to additional administrative, financial, and legal compliance considerations. Approval will be granted only if funding is available to cover the additional costs associated with managing out-of-state employment, including state registration fees, insurance adjustments, and ongoing compliance requirements.

The individual must be a key contributor to the study and must maintain a permanent out-of-state address. Once the move is completed, the employee will no longer be eligible for California-based benefits, and state-specific taxation requirements must be addressed in payroll and compliance processes. Additionally, NCIRE incurs setup and annual fees for maintaining out-of-state employment; the current annual fee is \$2,000, which is due each year on the employee's NCIRE hire anniversary date.

Out-of-country employment is not authorized by the SFVAHCS, as VA research must be conducted within the United States.

Timecard Review and Approval Procedure

At the end of each pay period, it is the responsibility of supervisors and Principal Investigators to assess and approve employee timecards. If any inaccuracies in time reporting are discovered, either the supervisor or the employee must notify NCIRE Payroll Staff at payroll@ncire.org immediately to facilitate necessary adjustments before payroll processing.

The supervisor's approval will be documented and serve as confirmation of the employee's contributions to their project during the pay period.

If corrections arise after payroll has been finalized, they must be communicated to NCIRE Payroll at payroll@ncire.org without delay.

In California, timely wage payment is critical. Under SB 261, late payments can trigger severe penalties, including waiting time penalties (up to 30 days of daily wages), statutory fines (\$100 for the first violation, \$200 for subsequent or willful violations plus 25% of unpaid wages), interest, and even triple penalties for unpaid judgments. NCIRE may also face mandatory attorney fees, creating significant financial and reputational risks. **Please approve your staff timesheets in a timely manner as required.**

Employee Exemption Status

It is the Principal Investigator's/supervisor's responsibility to understand the exemption status of each employee who reports to them. The rules that govern each employee are determined by the exemption status of their position. There are two types of exemption status at NCIRE: exempt and non-exempt.

An exempt employee is someone who is not legally entitled to overtime pay under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). These employees are paid a salary rather than an hourly wage. Determining whether an employer is exempt involves careful analysis of several factors, including job duties and

salary level. The classification of the role is done by Human Resources and applies to all individuals in that job role. Exempt employees are generally expected to exercise independent judgment and discretion in their roles. They often have more control over their schedules and may be responsible for supervising other employees or managing significant projects.

Non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime pay for any hours worked beyond 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a work week. These employees are typically paid on an hourly basis and often perform routine tasks under the supervision of a senior employee, supervisor, or manager. They are typically not involved in managerial or decision-making responsibilities and do not have the autonomy of an exempt employees.

If you are uncertain how any position in your laboratory is classified, NCIRE Human Resources can assist you in understanding the exemption status of any position.

Volunteers in the Laboratory

- **General**

All volunteers in your laboratory should be brought in via the SFVAHCS Volunteer Services Department. NCIRE does not have or support volunteers. This protects you as the Principal Investigator and the volunteer in the event of an injury or accident.

- **Current NCIRE Employees**

A paid NCIRE employee may not volunteer to work on your project, even if their primary job is in another laboratory. That includes via the Volunteer Services Department. The California Labor Code does not allow paid employees to perform unpaid work that is substantially similar to their paid work for the same organization.

Allowing such work may result in legal issues and is a violation of CA law. If you have questions about allowing a volunteer in your lab, please reach out to a member of Human Resources before engaging in this type of agreement.

Opportunities for Professional Development

NCIRE recognizes professional development as a vital component of the employee experience and expects all employees to participate in at least one professional development activity each year.

Principal Investigators are responsible for encouraging and facilitating participation in various and appropriate opportunities, such as training sessions, workshops, or conferences. Employees should document their participation and share this information during their annual performance evaluations. NCIRE will provide the necessary resources to support these activities, fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth within the organization.

SB 513 updates Labor Code §1198.5 to explicitly classify education and training records as personnel records, meaning employers must now treat them with the same rigor as evaluations, corrective actions, and other performance-related documents.

Required fields for every training record:

- Employee's full name
- Training provider name (internal trainer, external vendor, LMS provider, etc.)
- Date and duration of the training
- Core competencies or skills covered (e.g., harassment prevention, equipment operation, safety protocols)
- Certification or qualification earned, if applicable

This applies broadly to all types of training, including:

- Harassment prevention
- Workplace violence prevention
- OSHA and IIPP safety training
- Role-specific skills or equipment training
- Onboarding modules
- Technical or compliance training
- Any documented or certified training

Annual Performance Evaluations

All regular full-time and part-time NCIRE employees are entitled to an annual performance evaluation. It is the responsibility of Principal Investigators/Managers to provide timely and constructive evaluations for any employees assigned to them. Given the close working relationships between Principal Investigators and NCIRE personnel, the evaluations should reflect a comprehensive assessment of employee performance over the previous year. The feedback gathered from these evaluations will be used to support decisions on promotions, salary adjustments, and performance coaching.

Merit increases may be awarded in conjunction with the employee's performance evaluation when the employee meets performance expectations and when funding permits. If a merit increase is not awarded, a performance appraisal is still required and must be completed. NCIRE provides a base merit increase guideline each year, but the final merit increase amount is determined by the PI.

NCIRE staff may work on various projects under the direction of multiple supervisors or Investigators; in these cases, annual reviews should be comprehensive and include feedback from all supervisors and Investigators.

Work Performance and Conduct

When NCIRE employees fail to meet expectations, it is important to promptly contact NCIRE Human Resources for assistance in addressing the issue, which may involve coaching or implementing a performance improvement plan. Timely intervention benefits the employee, the Principal Investigator, and NCIRE as a whole. Additionally, if an employee exhibits inappropriate conduct or violates policies or ethical standards, HR should be notified immediately for guidance on the necessary actions. Principal Investigators are advised to consult with NCIRE HR before initiating any disciplinary measures to ensure adherence to proper procedures.

Termination

- **Voluntary Terminations:**

Principal Investigators are required to inform NCIRE Human Resources immediately upon learning that an employee intends to resign or has already resigned. Prompt notification is critical for ensuring that final paychecks are processed in accordance with legal requirements.

- **Involuntary Terminations:**

If a Principal Investigator determines that an NCIRE employee should be removed, they must notify NCIRE Human Resources. HR will evaluate the circumstances to decide whether the employee can be reassigned to another project or if termination is warranted. Together, HR and the Principal Investigator will develop an appropriate transition plan.

Principal Investigator Manual

In addition to the above expectations, all Principal Investigators are required to familiarize themselves with the NCIRE Principal Investigator Manual. The NCIRE PI Manual can be found [here](#).

Thank you for reviewing this information and for your ongoing contributions to maintaining NCIRE as a productive and positive workplace. Your engagement is greatly appreciated.

Principal Investigator: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____