**TEAM VIDA Statement of Ethics** *Finalized: 07/22/2025 Expires: 06/31/26*

## Section A: About us

We are TEAM VIDA, the Transmission Ecology and Mapping of Vector-borne Infectious Disease Agents lab. Our lotus logo symbolizes life, strength, and resilience across cultures. Like the lotus that emerges from murky waters after lying dormant for years or even centuries, it reflects both the resilience of communities impacted by vector-borne diseases and the unique challenges and strengths of us brings to our journey.

## Section B: Purpose of this document

This document is a shared guide for current and future members. It defines our lab values, outlines our collective expectations, and details the procedures we've agreed upon to uphold them.

## Section C: Statement of values

We value the diverse experiences and perspectives that individuals bring to our lab, the university, and the global community. We firmly believe that every respectful individual deserves equal rights, privileges, and opportunities and that these freedoms strengthen society as a whole. We prioritize each other's well-being, commit to grow rooted in humility and accountability, and aim to advance sciences in ways that meaningfully benefit society. Ultimately, we know that by fostering a culture of harmony, support, and collaboration, we create something far greater than the sum of our individual contributions.

## Section D: Introduction to the code of conduct

Guided by our values of fair treatment, well-being, personal growth, and making an impact, we recognize the essential role of maintaining a work environment that is: safe, sustainable, and productive. This environment is the foundation that allows us to achieve our goals, including the growth and betterment of all members, the advancement of the scientific community, and positive contributions to society at large.

To uphold this foundation, we have developed this code of conduct. It sets forth the expectations, principles, and procedures the guide our daily work and interactions. Each member of TEAM VIDA is responsible for acting in alignment with these guidelines.

**Definitions:**

*Safe: A workplace that adheres to all biosafety and occupational safety standards, and provides an environment where every member feels secure to contribute, grow, and be their authentic selves.*

*Sustainable: A culture that prioritizes individual well-being and group harmony, supporting long-term personal and professional fulfillment.*

*Productive: An environment that fosters rigorous research, meaningful collaboration, creative thinking, and the timely, transparent sharing of knowledge.*

## Section E: Code of conduct

**Principle #1: Respect and Belonging.** Our lab grows stronger through the diverse experiences, perspectives, knowledge, and self- expression each person brings. We are committed to creating a space where everyone feels safe, valued, and encouraged to be their authentic selves. Belonging means knowing you can contribute fully, trust your colleagues, and have your voice heard. By fostering mutual respect and care, we build a community where we can all thrive.

a. **Practice respectful conduct.** Treat all individuals with dignity, regardless of their role or background. Maintain professionalism in all communications, valuing each other's viewpoints even in disagreement, approaching conflicts with openness, and offering sincere apologies, feedback, and praise. When uncertain, treat others as you would wish to be treated.

b. **Cultivate a non-judgemental environment.** This means welcoming others' questions, mistakes, and differing experiences without criticism and ridicule. Be curious rather than dismissive; listen to understand rather than to judge. A non-judgemental attitude helps create a space where people feel safe to share ideas, admit uncertainties, and learn without fear of embarrassment.

c. **Respect individual boundaries.** Respect each person's physical, emotional, and social boundaries. Always ask before initiating physical contact, and never assume it is welcome. Honor others' limits around sharing personal experiences or feelings, and be especially mindful during emotionally charged conversations.

d. **Speak respectfully about colleagues.** Avoid talking negatively about lab members or colleagues behind their backs. If concerns arise, address them directly and constructively, or raise them in an appropriate, respectful setting. This builds trust and maintains a culture where everyone feels supported and safe.

e. **Maintain professionalism beyond the workplace.** Our shared responsibility for mutual respect, inclusion, and professionalism extends beyond the lab or formal work events. Whether attending conferences, social gatherings, or informal meet-ups, we continue to represent ourselves, each other, and our lab community. We commit to conduct ourselves with respect and care for one another's boundaries in all settings.

f. **Uphold non-discrimination.** Adhere to this non-discrimination policy as set forth by Colorado State University. In line with this policy, commit to support an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment based on race, age, creed, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender, disability, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or pregnancy. We firmly oppose - and pledge to address - bigotry and discrimination in all forms.

g. **Commit to learning and accountability.** Engage in our ongoing efforts to educate ourselves about issues affecting underrepresented groups and protected classes, e.g. microaggressions, unconscious bias, white supremacy, white saviorism, racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQI movements. We commit to recognizing our privileges, unlearning biases, and being willing to experience discomfort as we learn about lives different from our own. We understand that each of us is a work in progress, and we strive to create a safe space where we can learn from one another and hold each other accountable.

h. **Honor cultural diversity.** Honor cultural diversity of our lab, university, and global community by recognizing cultural holidays in a culturally appropriate manner.

**Resources.**

i. Colorado State University Non-Discrimination Statement
ii. Faith, Belief, and Religious Observances Calendar

**Principle #2: Personal Well-Being.** We believe that every individual deserves health, happiness, and support. We also recognize that when personal needs go unmet, every part of life - including work - can become more challenging. By prioritizing well-being, we strengthen not just individuals, but our entire team. We do this through open communication, clear expectations, and proactive use of resources and support. All lab members are expected to be familiar with the policies relevant to their roles and are encouraged to seek help early, before challenges become overwhelming.

a. **Understand working expectations.** Strict schedules are not required (e.g. Monday-Friday 9am-5pm). Generally, full-time salaried employees work an average of 40 hours per week and full-time graduate students work an average of 20 hours per week on specified research tasks that may or may not directly contribute to their dissertation, all while maintaining satisfactory academic progress and good standing in their program. Use leave in accordance with HR policies, and respect how colleagues set their schedules to support their own well-being.

b. **Balance in-person and remote work.** To support both individual well-being and our collective productivity, local lab members are generally expected to work on-site at least two days per week. This time is important for building connections, mentoring, and sustaining a collaborative and supportive environment. Remote work is supported for tasks that allow it, with the understanding that it should not compromise timely communication, availability for meetings, or shared responsibilities.

c. **Clarify mentor-mentee expectations.** Establish expectations collaboratively between the mentors and mentees, tailor them to the individual relationship, and document them in writing. Review and update these expectations during bi-annual evaluations to ensure alignment with evolving goals and well-being needs.

d. **Seek and give feedback.** Meet with your direct supervisor twice a year for formal reviews and planning. Have informal conversations anytime concerns or questions arise. Feedback helps ensure expectations, well-being, and growth stay aligned, and creates opportunities to adjust workloads or support as needed.

e. **Protect mental and physical health.** We acknowledge that academic research can come with mental health challenges, including low pay, long timelines, career uncertainty, isolation, burnout, discrimination, and the stresses of marginalization. Take an active approach to support your well-being; structure schedules to support health, attend necessary appointments, use leave when unwell, and communicate needs as you feel comfortable. Remember that no one is expected to work while sick or injured; use appropriate leave to care for your health.

f. **Prioritize sleep and rest.** Avoid sacrificing rest for productivity. Consistent rest helps prevent burnout and supports both long-term health and quality work. We respect that ks different for everyone, and we encourage supporting one another's needs without judgment.

g. **Resources:**

   i. HR Manual (Colorado State University Human Resource Services)

   ii. Graduate Assistant Benefits, Resources, and Policies

   iii. Contact HR with Questions About Benefits and Rights

   iv. CVMBS Wellbeing Resources

   v. Well-being, Mental Health, and Counseling Services

   vi. Student Case Management

**Principle #3: Growth and Development.** Personal growth is a continuous journey of building skills, expanding knowledge, and embracing new challenges. As we each grow, we strengthen the quality, collaboration, and impact of our lab as a whole.

a. **Practice humility**. Acknowledge your limitations and stay open to learning and feedback. Remember you are not your work; constructive criticism helps you grow.
b. **Be accountable.** Take responsibility for actions and the impacts they have. Follow through on your commitments, own your mistakes, learn from them, and strive to do better. Accountability builds trust and respect in the lab and is essential for both personal and professional growth.
c. **Set clear goals.** Develop and maintain an Individual Development Plan (IDP), updating it as your goals evolve. Use SMART goals - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound - to create a clear path forward. Revisit these goals regularly to track progress and adjust as needed, identifying any support or resources that could help you continue to grow.
d. **Embrace a growth mindset.** Recognize that your skills and knowledge can develop with effort and time. Mistakes and setbacks are a natural part of learning and shouldn't stop you from exploring new ideas. Be open about errors and mistakes: acknowledge them, document what happened, communicate clearly, and then focus on solutions and moving forward. Growth comes through persistence, experimentation, and thoughtful reflection.
e. **Learn together, without judgment.** Seek mentors and peers who can offer support, expertise, and diverse perspectives. Likewise, be generous in sharing your own knowledge and experience with others. Encourage and support each other's growth without ridicule or belittling. We grow best in a trusting environment where everyone feels safe to ask questions, admit uncertainties, and explore new ideas.
f. **Engage proactively.** Pursue opportunities that align with your goals. Don't wait to be told what to do - seek out workshops, training, collaborations, and projects that challenge and inspire you. Be active in shaping your own learning and development.
g. **Build resilience and celebrate progress.** Recognize that growth includes frustration and uncertainty. Resilience means continuing forward with perspective and purpose. Allow yourself space to rest and recover when needed, and seek support from mentors, peers, or professional services. Take time to recognize and celebrate milestones, both your own and those of your colleagues.
h. **Resources.**
    i. **Individual Development Plan (My IDP - AAAS)**
    ii. **SMART Goals: A How-To Guide**

Principle #4: **Collegiality and Collaboration.** Collegiality means working together with respect, cooperation, and professionalism. It creates a positive environment where we support one another and advance shared goals, recognizing that how we collaborate directly shapes the quality, impact, and integrity of our science.

a. **Support the team.** Share your knowledge, expertise, and resources generously. Be willing to train and mentor junior lab members, using best practices that include mutual respect, clear expectations, open communication, and awareness of power dynamics in mentor-mentee relationships. When giving feedback, pair constructive criticism with thoughtful solutions and maintain a healthy balance of encouragement and critique.

b. **Engage fully.** Participate actively in lab and departmental life. Come to meetings prepared and focused, limit distractions, and contribute to discussions. Attend your colleagues' presentations and make CVID's Monday Afternoon Meeting (MAM) a priority for sharing and learning. Engage in other departmental events when possible and collaborate with peers when called upon and feasible.

c. **Communicate openly**. Maintain open, timely, and transparent communication. Share updates, information, and research findings promptly with the team. Listen actively, ask clarifying questions, and be genuinely curious about others' perspectives, especially when they differ from your own.

d. **Encourage growth without judgment.** Recognize that everyone begins at a different place in their scientific skills, knowledge, and comfort levels. As long as people are making a sincere effort to learn, meet them with patience and support rather than judgment. Avoid judgment or ridicule, so all team members feel comfortable asking questions, admitting uncertainties, and sharing ideas.

e. **Resolve conflicts constructively**. Approach disagreements with openness, curiosity and respect. Seek to understand the other person's perspective, communicate directly and calmly, and work toward solutions through open dialogue. Seek support from leadership or university resources if needed.

f. **Recognize contributions.** Value and appropriately credit the work of others. In collaborative projects, be transparent about authorship, acknowledgments, and intellectual contributions from the start to ensure fairness and trust.

g. **Foster psychological safety.** Create space for all voices. Encourage diverse input, listen to understand, and support an environment where everyone feels safe to ask questions, share ideas, and admit uncertainties without fear of ridicule or dismissal.

h. **Represent the lab with care and professionalism.** Remember that how you present yourself and your work - through scientific talks, posters, publications, collaborations, classes, or informal conversations - reflects not only on you but on your lab mates and the team as a whole. Strive for clarity, accuracy, and integrity in your presentations and communications. Maintain respect and professionalism in every interaction, recognizing that the way you engage with others shapes our lab's reputation and creates opportunities for everyone connected to it.

**Principle #5: Rigor, Reproducibility, and Transparency.** We uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity and accountability, following NIH guidance. Our commitment to rigor, reproducibility, and transparency ensures that our work is robust, unbiased, and valuable to the broader scientific community.

a. **Definitions.** *Scientific rigor* means applying the scientific method strictly to achieve robust and unbiased design, methods, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. *Reproducibility* is the ability of another researcher to duplicate findings using the same materials and protocols. *Transparency* involves sharing knowledge and data as openly, accessibly, and objectively as possible to support broad dissemination, understanding, and use.

b. **Design robust studies.** Discuss and document the strengths and limitations of your experimental design with the team, referencing existing literature. Carefully determine sample sizes and replicates through statistical approaches. Always include appropriate positive and negative controls to validate your results and interpret outcomes accurately. Identify potential sources of bias and outline strategies to mitigate them.

c. **Maintain rigor in the lab.** Follow SOPs closely and incorporate quality control checks throughout your experiments. Document all experimental steps in the electronic lab notebook within 24 hours, including details on reagents, primers, reaction conditions, thermocycling, plate set-ups, and gels. Keep precise records of sample locations, label samples with unique IDs, and link metadata and data dictionaries to these IDs.

d. **Prevent contamination.** Keep designated work areas (i.e. pre-PCR clean, DNA handling, and post-PCR/amplicon areas) separate and move only from clean to DNA to amplicon areas within a day. If reversing is unavoidable, change gloves and take additional precautions. Decontaminate surfaces and equipment before and after use, use proper pipetting techniques to prevent aerosols and contamination, and aliquot reagents rather than using common stocks. Stay alert through routine quality control checks and address unexpected results immediately by troubleshooting with peers.

e. **Maintain rigor in field work.** Always standardize and follow protocols for sampling, measurements, and observations. Clearly label samples with unique identifiers and enter data carefully and completely. Document any unexpected issues right away and communicate with the team. Back up digital data at the end of each day.

f. **Ensure reproducibility in coding and analysis.** Write clean, well-documented code with clear comments and logical structure so others can easily understand, verify, and build on your work. Organize scripts, data, and outputs in clearly labeled folders with README files on TEAM VIDA's shared storage, updating them regularly. Use version control tools like Git to track changes. Keep scripts and documentation current, and encourage peer reviews to strengthen our collective rigor. When projects or milestones are complete, archive final datasets, code (with version history), and data dictionaries on long-term platforms and GitHub for secure preservation and future reproducibility.

g. **Foster openness and accountability**. Encourage questions and peer reviews to strengthen our collective rigor. Share protocols, data, and materials transparently within our team and, when appropriate, with the broader scientific community.

h. **Resources.**

   i. **CSU Vice President for Research: Enhancing Transparency Guidance**

   ii. **NIH Rigor and Reproducibility Policy**

   iii. **Reproducible Analysis Resources (CSU Libraries)**

**Principle #6: Scholarship and Intellectual Integrity.** We define scholarship as the pursuit of academic excellence through rigorous inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge, and the application of new discoveries to benefit society. As a lab, we advance the field through innovation, collaboration, clear communication, and the highest ethical standards.

a. I**nnovate.** Ask what gap your work fills and why it matters now. Stay current with literature and learn new methods through workshops and trainings. Conceptual and technical innovation are essential for generating new knowledge and moving the field forward.

b. **Disseminate knowledge.** Prioritize high-quality, meaningful publications. Make plans, set realistic timelines, revisit them regularly, and hold yourself accountable. Beyond manuscripts, seek out opportunities to present your research at conferences and share findings with both scientific and public audiences. Be transparent about your methods, limitations, and even unexpected or negative results - all of which advance collective understanding.

c. **Build knowledge together.** Use lab meetings to discuss projects and troubleshoot challenges. Share articles, insights, and ideas that might help colleagues. Contribute to mentoring junior scientists, helping them develop the skills to publish, present, and drive discovery.

d. **Uphold academic integrity.** Plagiarism - using another person's academic work without proper acknowledgment - is a serious violation of trust and intellectual property. Always give credit where it is due, cite responsibly, and uphold ethical standards in every aspect of your work.

e. **Resources**
    i. CSU Guide on Plagiarism
    ii. University of Michigan Plagiarism Guide

**Principle #7: Safety and Responsibility.** Maintaining a safe environment is essential for protecting everyone's health, well-being, and the integrity of our research. Each of us is responsible for following safety practices in the lab, field, and while traveling for work.

a. **Follow occupational and lab safety practices.** Complete all required safety trainings on time and follow established safety guidelines and procedures. Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures, such as spill response, evacuation routes, and contact information for urgent situations.

b. **Care for equipment.** Handle instruments carefully, power them down after use to prevent hazards and prolong their life, and report any malfunctions or damage immediately.

c. **Stay safe in the field**. Follow all field-specific safety protocols and adhere to local regulations. Always check weather conditions before heading out and do not conduct field work in hazardous weather. Have a clear plan for where you're going, how to get there, and how you'll return. Stay alert to other risks in the field, such as uneven terrain, wildlife, or environmental hazards, and know how to respond if you encounter them. If driving, abide by all traffic laws, ensure vehicles are in safe condition, and avoid driving when fatigued, distracted, or under adverse conditions. Communicate your plans and expected return times to colleagues, maintain situational awareness, and actively look out for the safety and well-being of your field partners.

d. **Stay safe during work-related travel.** Plan ahead and use common-sense precautions to protect your safety and well-being. Stay aware of your surroundings, especially in unfamiliar places, and check in with colleagues to ensure everyone feels safe and supported. If consuming alcohol, do so responsibly; avoid excessive drinking that could impair your judgment or put you or others at risk. Be mindful of how your actions reflect on the lab and university, and look out for each other.

e. Look out for one another. Safety is a shared responsibility in the lab, the field, and during travel. Be alert to risks, maintain a supportive environment, and actively look out for the well-being of your colleagues.

f. **Report incidents.** Promptly report any injuries, near misses, equipment malfunctions, unsafe conditions, or possible exposures to pathogens or other hazardous materials - whether in the lab or the field. Timely reporting helps us address risks, prevent future incidents, and maintain a safe environment for everyone.

g. **Resources.**

    i. CSU Incident Reporting

**Principle #8: Stewardship and Community Care.** A clean, organized, and considerate work environment is essential for our research and for fostering a supportive community. Each of us plays a role in maintaining our shared spaces, ensuring our lab runs smoothly, and caring for one another.

a. **Plan and communicate your work.** Use the shared calendar to book equipment and lab spaces in advance. If you plan to reserve a resource for an extended time (such as more than three hours per day for three consecutive days), communicate with the team first to avoid scheduling conflicts. Discuss your plans when needed so others can coordinate their work effectively.

b. **Maintain cleanliness and organization.** Return items to their designated places after use. Finish a reagent or pipette tip box before opening a new one. Mark opened items with a dot and/or date opened. Keep benches, instruments, and shared spaces clean and uncluttered. Dispose of used tips in biohazard waste, and when bags are full, autoclave and discard them. Ask for help if you're unfamiliar with any process.

c. **Help sustain shared supplies.** Help maintain shared stocks, so we avoid disruptions in lab work. If you notice consumables running low, use the ordering system to request more. If a common reagent is running low, prepare more for the group following documented protocols. Ask for help if you're unfamiliar with any process.

d. **Handle deliveries responsibly.** Check for packages in the delivery area. If you see packages for our lab, check them in by confirming storage requirements, marking the item as received, and storing them properly. Dispose of packaging appropriately. We keep a limited number of Styrofoam containers (with their shipping box) - discard extras if storage is full.

e. **Take care of common resources.** Use instruments and shared tools thoughtfully. Handle them carefully, and let the team know immediately if something is broken or not working properly so it can be addressed.

f. **Watch out for each other.** A supportive community is proactive. Be attentive to issues that might create safety, workflow, or interpersonal problems. Step in to help when needed, and foster an atmosphere where colleagues feel comfortable asking for assistance or raising concerns.

g. **Know our protocols.** Review the general lab procedures in our electronic notebook so you are familiar with our expectations and best practices. Keeping yourself informed is key to maintaining a well-functioning, safe, and collaborative environment.

## Section F: Revisiting and strengthening our code of conduct

Each year, we dedicate at least one meeting to assess how well our code of conduct supports our health, sustainability, and productivity. The purpose of this discussion is not to address individual infractions, which should be managed as they arise, but to focus on the overall environment and shared expectations. A month prior, lab members can anonymously propose amendments or topics for discussion. Together, we reflect on:

- How effectively we uphold our principles.
- How we might improve individually and as a group.
- Whether our guiding principles still help us maintain a supportive, productive lab.
- How we might adapt them to serve us better.

The overarching aim is to create a dedicated space for open, constructive, and judgment- free dialogue.

## Section G: Addressing Concerns and Infractions

We share responsibility for upholding this code. If you realize you've fallen short, offer a sincere apology and commit to doing better. Provide a gentle reminder. Address the concern directly by reminding the person of our code of conduct.
Options for addressing concerns:

- Provide a gentle reminder to the individual.
- Notify Liz directly or via our anonymous reporting form.
- Seek outside support.
    - For students: Student Resolution Center for Conflict Resolution
    - For employees: The Office of the Ombuds or Human Employee Relations
    - For all CVMBS affiliates: CVMBS Community Support

Repeated infractions may lead to engagement with conflict resolution services. If someone declines to participate, they may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Resources:

- Employee Resources for Conflict Resolution
- Student Resolution Center
- Office of the Ombuds
- Office for Inclusive Excellence
- Human Resources Employee Relations
- CSU Office of Equal Opportunity

## Section H: Prohibited behavior.

Harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, violence, abusive behavior, bullying, and retaliation are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Any individual who engages in such behavior may face disciplinary action in line with Colorado State University policies. All lab members are expected to be familiar with CSU's policies on prohibited conduct:

- Bullying in the Workplace Policy
- Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Violence Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Retaliation Policy

If you observe or experience prohibited behavior, we strongly encourage you to take action. In addition to the informal options described in Section E (such as notifying Liz or seeking guidance from campus conflict support offices), you may also choose to file a formal complaint.

How to file a complaint:

- If both parties are students:
  - Discrimination complaints are filed to the Student Resolution Center
  - Sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or retaliation are filed to the Office of Title IX Programs and Gender Equity.

- If at least one party is not a student:
  - Discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation complaints are filed to the Office of Equal Opportunity
  - Sexual misconduct, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or retaliation complaints are filed to the Office of Title IX Programs and Gender Equity

Resources:

- Reporting Resources (CSU Support and Safety)
- Employee Resources for Conflict Resolution
- Student Resolution Center
- Office of the Ombuds
- Office for Inclusive Excellence
- Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO)
- Office of Title IX and Gender Equity
- Human Resources Employee Relations
- OEO: Where to File a Complaint
- CSU Policy Library
- CVMBS Office of Culture, Community, and Collaboration