

ABCRC Policy for Operations Under COVID 19 Restrictions

Our goal is to develop a research environment that supports the safe and reasonable continuation of long term and graduate research by staff and scientists.

Our decisions will be based on Federal, State, County, and University of Virginia public health recommendations and will be guided by information on COVID-19 prevention and response from reliable sources.

Virginia Coronavirus overview + status <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>

Virginia Dept of Health <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>

Virginia guidelines for moving into Phase I

<https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/#856423>

UVA continuation of research <https://research.virginia.edu/ResearchContinuity>

Current (as of May 1, 2020) general guidelines for prevention of Covid-19 include:

1. **Hygiene** (e.g., wash hands, avoid touching face, wear mask)
2. **Physical (Social) Distancing** 6 ft (2m) minimum
3. **Quarantine & Isolation** If you are sick or may have been exposed, self-quarantine for two weeks.
4. Cleaning and disinfection protocols follow UVA custodial guidance (see below) to minimize environmental exposure and use [EPA-approved sanitizing solutions](#).
5. Additional CDC and VA guidance on PPE, hygiene, and quarantine
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/cloth-face-covers/>
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions/isolation-quarantine-movement-restrictions-public-health-monitoring/>

Success of our research depends on adherence to the enclosed policies. Failure to follow these policies could lead to a closure of the facility to researchers.

The following phases, [defined by the University of Virginia](#) and summarized here, will inform the policies in place at the ABCRC at any given time.

We assume that no classes, public programs, or visits and only critical research conducted by staff will occur during Phase 0, and that no restrictions will exist under Phase III other than normal cleaning and disinfecting procedures. During Phases I and II, visiting researchers should expect to make shorter and more infrequent visits due to reduced capacity. **All visitors will be required to maintain UVA expectations of**

- 1. Social distancing**
- 2. Hygiene (handwashing and sanitizing)**
- 3. Use of face coverings at all times**

<p>UVA Phase 0: <i>(VA State – Stay at Home order in place)</i> “Designated faculty & staff may continue work on key research in labs using the appropriate protective safety equipment and maintaining proper social distancing requirements.” Work from Home orders in place Labs closed except to essential personnel conducting critical research</p>
<p>UVA Phase I: <i>(VA State – Safest at Home order in place [travel restrictions lifted])</i> “Researchers allowed back on grounds who can attest to health expectations and ongoing compliance with safety guidelines. Select graduate students can return based on school prioritization to the essential nature of the work.” Low density operations of essential personnel, research support staff, and graduate students Research may proceed via an approval process Heightened safety restrictions in place (density/distance, health monitoring, hygiene, face coverings)</p>
<p>UVA Phase II: “On-grounds density levels can increase as disease spread is deemed under control and effectively monitored, and/or management and treatments options are successfully advanced to acceptable levels set forth by the Commonwealth.” Medium density</p>
<p>UVA Phase III: “Individuals allowed to work in all environments normally following any new and permanent implementation of safety guidelines. Allowance of Undergraduate researchers back in labs subject to safety guidelines.” Full operation under new conditions Expected no sooner than fall semester 2020.</p>

All researchers will be required to complete an Environmental Health and Safety training and acknowledge all lab safety policies before visiting the ABCRC.

We will use a combination of pre-visit criteria and on-site procedures to maximize the safety of staff and scientists. These policies are intended to protect members of our research community as well as members of the local community in which the facility resides. Members of our research community will acknowledge all policies and their awareness that they have the option to opt out of the field work/living situation at any time if they have concerns about their safety or health.

In case concerns about safety cannot be resolved within a project, any member of a research team may contact the station director Cora Johnston/ LTER lead PI Karen McGlathery (primary contacts) or UVA Environmental Sciences Chair Howie Epstein (secondary contact) for help establishing mutually agreeable solutions.

Cora Johnston (site director): coraj@virginia.edu, (757)620-7016

Karen McGlathery (LTER lead PI): kjm4k@virginia.edu, (434) 825-6273

Howie Epstein (Environmental Sciences Dept Chair): hee2b@virginia.edu, (434) 924-4308

No person may visit (or report to work at) the ABCRC while exhibiting symptoms of illness (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>). Anyone with a reasonable likelihood of exposure, including air travel, is also not permitted at the lab until a 14-day self-quarantine (i.e. maintaining low risk conditions) is confirmed.

All researchers requesting access to the ABCRC facilities (lab, boats, housing) must agree to do the following:

- Have low risk of exposure in the previous 14 days, including limitations on travel from their home, visits to public places, and groups >10 people. In addition, researchers must be able to answer 'no' to the following questions for the 14 days prior to their planned visit (taken from [VA Dept of Health guidelines](#)).

Have you had

1. A new fever (100.4°F or higher) or a sense of having a fever?
 2. A new cough?
 3. New shortness of breath?
 4. New chills?
 5. A new sore throat?
 6. New muscle aches (myalgia)?
- Complete UVA online COVID awareness & precaution training module from EHS
 - Complete and sign daily health acknowledgement form (received electronically)
 - Fill out a daily work attendance log while working at the ABCRC

When planning to stay at the lab, each visitor should bring what they need for the duration of the visit. To minimize the exchange of risk between communities, researchers residing at the lab are expected to stay on site except for research excursions. Visiting researchers are restricted from visiting local businesses and attractions during their stay. Such restrictions apply to grocery stores, bars, ice cream shops, and convenience stores, among others. *Residents of the lab should assume that the lab is a research vessel leaving port upon your arrival.*

Visiting scientists are encouraged to make day trips when feasible and to minimize repeated stays as much as possible. Between the options to make two overnight visits in a week or stay once for three

nights, plan to do the latter. Researchers and staff should coordinate closely to maximize productivity while minimizing travel and community contact.

Anyone who begins experiencing symptoms* while at the facility must immediately cease research activity, alert the station director (or staff), self-isolate, and seek testing by calling Eastville Community Health Center at (757) 331-1086. Plan to return home as soon as possible, and stay in contact with station staff, the University, and the local health department to facilitate contact tracing if the test results are positive. ABCRC sign in/out logs and float plans will be used to facilitate contact tracing, as needed.

*i.e. answering “yes” to any of the six (6) screening questions above

Station staff will alert all visitors and employees if a case of COVID-19 is suspected on site.

Any visiting researchers should also alert the station director if you develop symptoms within 14 days of your time at the ABCRC.

Vehicles

In all phases, commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned with an [EPA-approved solution](#) before returning the vehicle. In Phases I-II a staff member in a truck can help transport large field gear as needed for land-based field crews.

Phases 0 and I

Only staff may use ABCRC vehicles (no use by visiting researchers).

Density is restricted to one person per vehicle.

As needed, vehicles may be fueled at lab tanks to prevent public contact.

Phase II

Only staff may use vehicles. Two people may co-occupy a vehicle with proper face coverings.

Lodging

The residence facility will be operated at reduced densities until Phase III. The residence contains 9-10 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, and 3 kitchens (and a kitchenette) distributed across 4 suites. Suites will be left unoccupied for 24-48 hours between visits to allow for disinfecting and cleaning by the housekeeping contractor.

Visitors are expected to wear face coverings whenever outside your suite.

Phase 0

Residences are closed to all visitors. Facilities have been cleaned and locked.

Phase I

At **low density**, each of the 4 suites may be occupied by a single visiting researcher (n=4 residents). A kitchenette will be established in suite A and the door and airflow between A and B closed to allow the A and B suites to be separately occupied.

The number of researchers residing on site may only exceed four (4) if researchers already in close contact (e.g. existing roommates or spouses who would quarantine together) co-occupy a suite.

Phase II

At **moderate density**, suites can be occupied at a density of one person per bedroom, which is equivalent to two persons per bathroom (n=9-10 residents). Thus, up to 4 people will share a kitchen (no more than 2 share a refrigerator).

Suites will be staged so that no more than one person should occupy a shared kitchen or bathroom at any time. See cleaning procedures between uses, below.

Increased cleaning standards will be implemented during Phases I and II.

Housekeeping will clean weekly and between visitors (room turnover), following UVA custodial recommendations:

1. Housekeeping staff will wear masks and gloves and following proper donning/doffing procedures for both.
2. All staff should receive training on COVID 19- how it spreads, how long it lives on various surfaces, how to protect yourself if you need to enter a space that was occupied by someone who tested positive for COVID 19, etc.
3. We treat all surfaces as if they are contaminated and observe universal precautions.
4. Use an EPA certified disinfectant and make sure the proper dwell time is followed to kill COVID 19.
5. Touch points, restrooms, kitchenettes, and any shared spaces should be disinfected more frequently.

Residents are expected to

1. Sanitize surfaces before and after each use. (For example, kitchen surfaces should be wiped down with approved solution after each meal is prepared.)
 - a. Clean high touch surfaces (light switches, door knobs, etc) at least twice a day using the cleaning supplies provided.
2. Use the clean linens provided, washing them in the laundry facilities as needed during your visit.
3. Upon departure
 - a. Remove all linens that you used and place them in the linen service bags on the porch (near suite A). Place any non-white items in the designated hamper.
 - b. Any dishes used should be washed on hot with detergent and left in the dishwasher.
 - c. Wipe high touch surfaces on your way out.

Visitors are encouraged to occupy open air spaces whenever reasonable. Distancing (6') must be maintained during any shared use of the decks and porches.

Each suite will have a designated picnic table (see the letter label) and one chair each on the front and back porches.

Chairs should be sanitized regularly.

Chairs and picnic tables will be sprayed with sanitizing solution between stays (change of occupant in a suite).

If someone begins to show symptoms (see the six screening questions in pre-visit section)

- Alert staff, follow the response plan outlined above (for testing and tracing), and use the following procedure upon vacating the suite

- All white linens should be washed in hot water with bleach and then placed in the linen service hampers. They will be professionally laundered by ABCRC's contractor during regular service.
- If you have used an ABCRC pillow, dispose of it with your garbage.
- Used dishes should be run in the dishwasher on the hot setting and left sealed.
- Garbage should be gathered into the bags provided and disposed of directly in the dumpster on premises.
- Vacated suites will remain locked for 48 hours prior to be cleaned following approved protocols, using designated solutions, by our housekeeping contractor.
- In case symptoms emerge, all visitors have the right to vacate the facility and may be asked to vacate ahead of schedule. Any visitor who leaves should stay in contact with station staff and the University.

Research Labs

Check in/out logs will be posted at a central location. Sanitizer and policies will be posted at each entrance. Congregating is strictly prohibited. While working in research labs, 250 sqft will be allocated per person. Distancing of 9' should be maintained in all rooms and at least 6' in the hallways.

Phase 0

Labs are closed except for staff use for critical research support. Only one staff member occupies a lab space at a time.

Phase I (and likely II)

Lab spaces will be operated at **low density**. Scientists will be assigned to lab space at a density of one per lab.

Common use equipment will be used on an assigned basis and cleaned between uses. As needed, laboratory equipment will be decentralized to allow assigned use without sharing (e.g., for freezers and ovens).

Staff work will be completed in the Sonde lab unless other labs are unoccupied. The front porch rinse station is retained for field gear clean up.

The back porch rinse station will be assigned as a lab space (one user per period, sanitized between uses). Additional porch or outdoor work spaces will be established and assigned as needed.

Doors

Staff will enter via the back porch door by the breakroom and exit by the housekeeping supplies.

Visiting scientists will enter via the front door and exit at the end of the hallway by the director's office.

The prep lab double doors should be primarily used from the inside (push to exist) to reduce interaction with knobs or handles.

Restrooms

Visiting scientists should only use the restroom in their assigned suite.

Staff will use lab restrooms as designated (1/2 to each) to reduce sharing.

Day visitors will be informed which restroom to use within the lab.
Use of the seminar room is prohibited.
Except where specified, rooms should always be occupied by only a single user.

Boats

During phases in which social distancing (6' spacing) practices remain in place, personnel densities are conservatively determined by boat footage; these calculations make the most sense based on a stationary platform, so partitioning of passengers on board during operation is needed to further reduce risk.

No more than 2 persons on boats <21'. No more than 3 persons on boats 21-25'. While stationary (boarding, loading, deploying equipment) on a boat with two persons aboard, the captain occupies the stern while the passenger occupies the bow. While underway, the two occupants should reside on opposite sides (starboard and port) of the boat as distant as is safely feasible.

To further reduce risk of airborne contamination while underway, boats will be operated at a maximum speed of 2500-3000 rpms or the lowest rate at which planing can be maintained on any given vessel.

Each person is responsible for handling their own supplies, including research equipment and personal provisions. Each person will have access to a dedicated cooler for supplies; no shared drinks or foods will be permitted.

PPE (gloves and face covering) must be worn whenever reasonable while underway; fishing buffs can help keep cotton face masks in place while underway. Use of quick drying buffs as face covers may also be considered in wet conditions (like conducting sampling). Both will be provided by the facility (via LTER or UVA), as needed.

Each boat will contain a supply of hand sanitizer that should be used before/after eating and drinking or in addition to gloves when shared surfaces are unavoidable (e.g. boarding ladder). *The influences of both proximity and ventilation (air exchange) on risk of virus exposure were considered in the development of these policies. Some overview of what is known is [available here](#).*

Field work

As possible, bring and maintain your own field gear. Each person should select and retain field gear for the duration of the season. Never share or exchange materials.

Bufs, snorkels, and wetsuits (among others) should be maintained and cleaned by the user through the season or visit.

At the end of the field season or major sampling campaigns, all reusable field gear will be washed by staff with EPA approved solutions.

Always wear face coverings, as is reasonably safe (e.g. not if wet buff unreasonably restricts breathing).

Maintain social distancing (6-9'); as needed, protocols should be adapted to enable distancing. To help with logistics, *try planning your research as if each person is diving and needs to be able to function independently during sampling* (i.e., avoid handing off materials or samples, have a plan for data recording without people in close proximity).

Staff will have resources on hand to help facilitate more independence (e.g. less exchange of materials) during sampling.

Do not execute protocols for which distance cannot be maintained. Such protocols may be considered when negative tests can be confirmed for all field members directly adjacent to sampling days.

Work at low densities but never alone. Confirm your plan for a field buddy with staff.

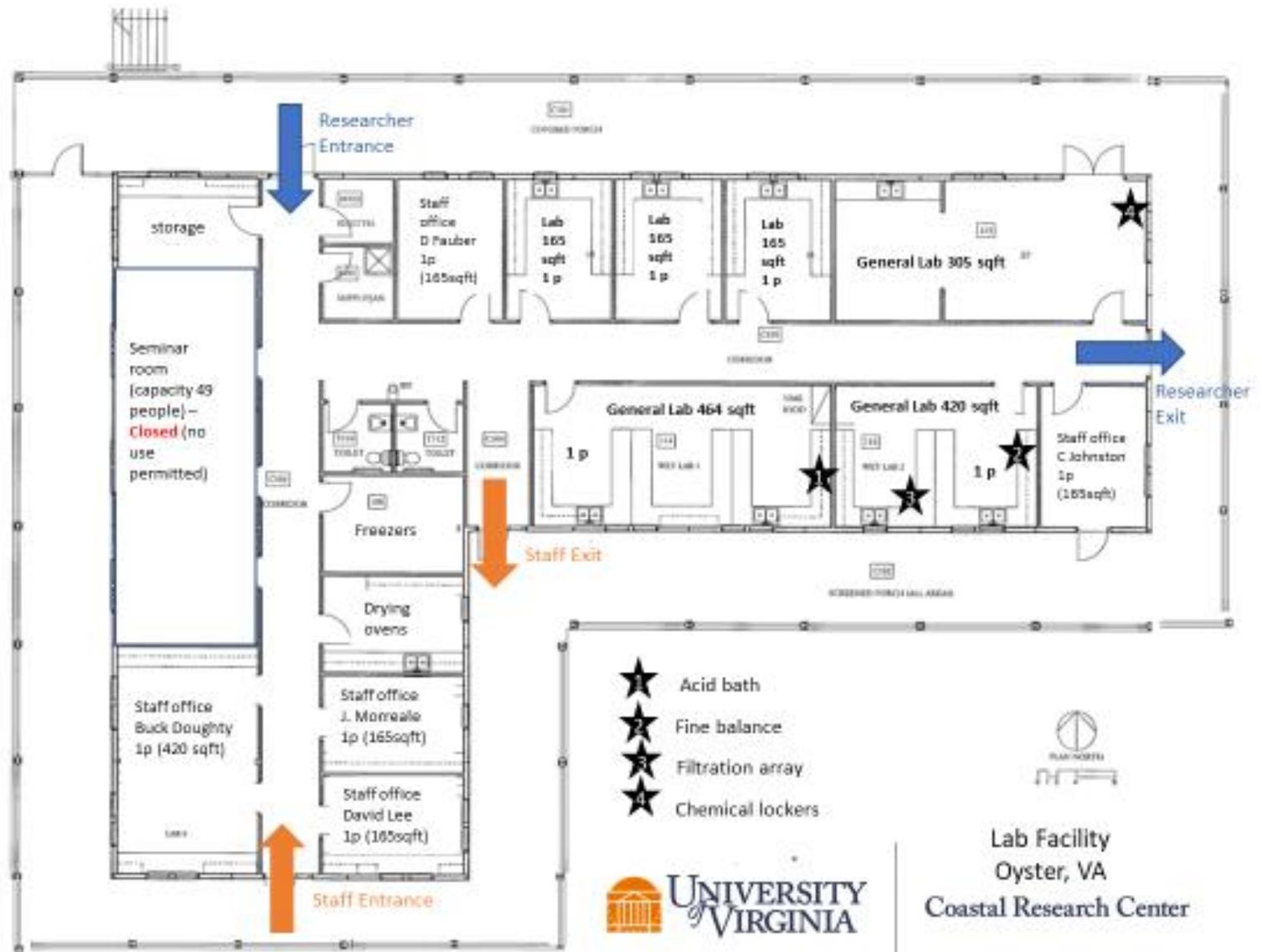
If you find yourself or your field buddy in need of first aid, be sure to use PPE and maintain distance whenever possible (e.g. by directing response rather than administering it yourself). If you need medical assistance, please call ahead before visiting a medical facility.

To help with the uncertainty and anxiety induced by the COVID 19 situation, counseling and mental health services are available through UVA.

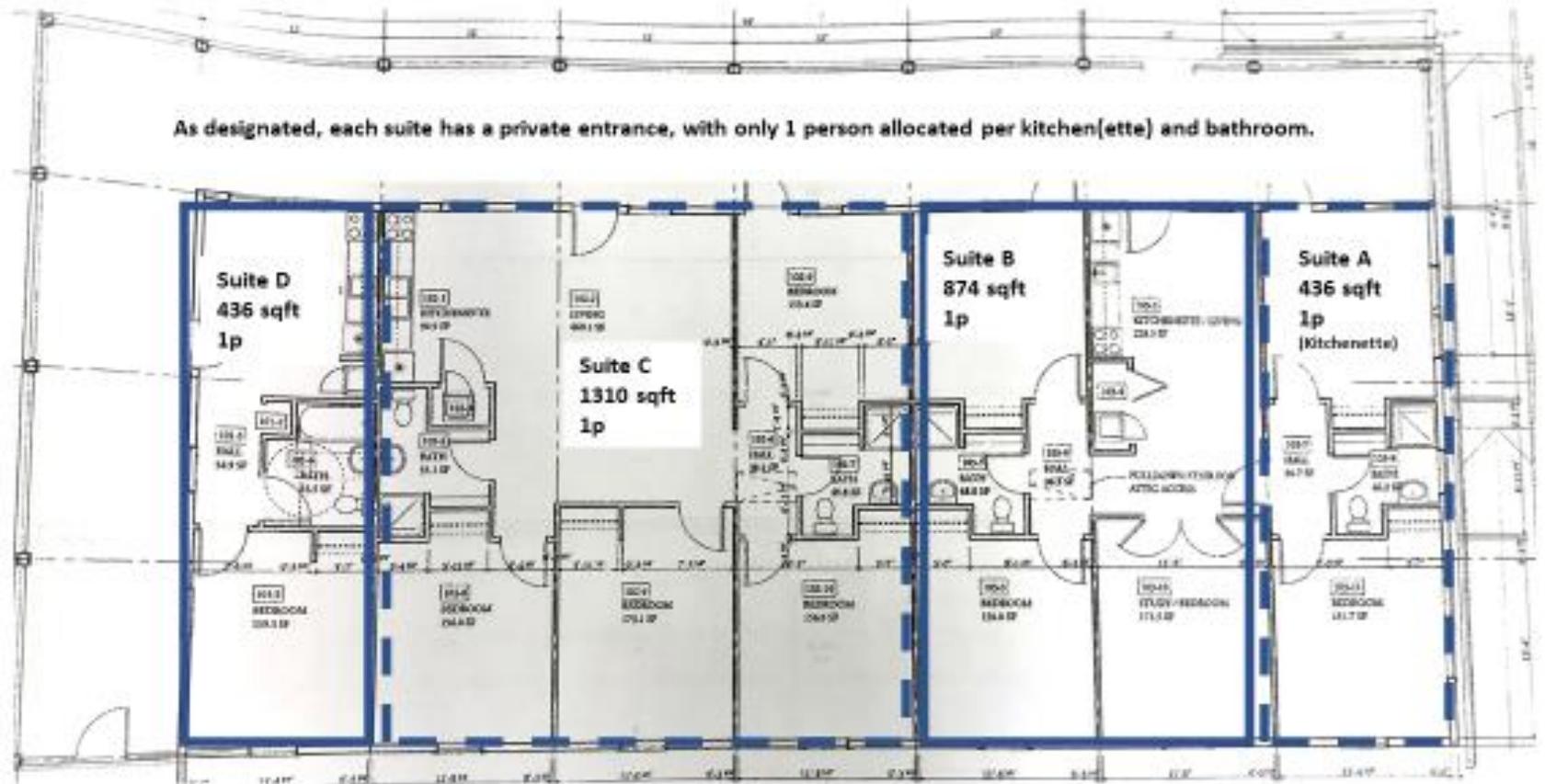
A schematic of the facility (laboratory and residence buildings) is appended for reference.



Coastal Research Center



As designated, each suite has a private entrance, with only 1 person allocated per kitchen(ette) and bathroom.



Residence Facility
Oyster, VA



Coastal Research Center