The North Carolina Education Research Data Center facilitates problem-focused research on education by sharing data with qualified researchers.

The NCERDC data on students, teachers, and schools are available for research purposes only. Eligibility, procedures for requesting access to the data, and data security requirements are described in the document NCERDC Data Use Agreement and briefly outlined below:

**Summary Checklist**

1. Data application cover sheet
2. Proposal including abstract, description of the project, and statement of benefits to the Data Center
3. Data Security Plan
4. IRB approval from the Principal Investigator's institution, for a protocol that includes the Data Security Plan
5. Signed confidentiality agreements from the PI and all research staff
6. Data Request Form
7. Signed Data Disclosure and Destruction Agreement
8. For faculty only - Compensation of the Data Center for access to the data and time spent on the project by Data Center personnel.
9. For students only - Faculty sponsorship of the proposal, indicated by a letter of support.

Forms can be emailed to kara.bonneau@duke.edu.

**Eligible Institutions and Researchers**

Data can be released to: an institution of higher education or a non-profit research institution, or a government agency located within the United States. The institution must have established protocols for an Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects, to review proposals for research projects employing sensitive data. Researchers requesting NCERDC data must have their primary affiliation with an eligible institution, or be a currently enrolled student in a doctoral program at an eligible institution.

**I. Procedures for Obtaining Data**

**A. All Researchers:**

All who use data from the Data Center will have to do the following, as described in the Data Use Agreement:

- Complete and sign the Data Use Agreement.
- Sign an Investigator confidentiality agreement.
• Ensure that their research assistants and associates sign a confidentiality agreement and abide by the procedures for protecting confidentiality of the data.

• Obtain their institution's IRB approval of their project (expedited or full review). The research protocol submitted to the IRB must include the Data Security Plan for this project.

• Complete a Data Request form.

• Agree to send any paper to DPI and the Data Center before publication. Such papers include accepted publications and press releases.

• Agree to destroy all copies of the data, original and derived, on the date stated in the Disclosure and Data Destruction Agreement.

• Agree to provide the Data Center with an access fee to cover the administrative costs and personnel time spent on project review, setting up accounts, and providing data files and documentation. The standard fee is $2210, equivalent to two days of Data Center services. This fee also covers limited email consultation to the investigator and/or research staff as to the origins, structure, and general content of the data files sent. This fee is waived for researchers who are doctoral candidates, and may occasionally be negotiated for faculty who are not able to obtain external funding for data acquisition. We encourage these researchers to seek funding sources within their universities, and will provide them with any materials that they may need for this process.

Requests for data customization will involve additional fees to compensate the Data Center for time that personnel spend on the project. During the proposal review process, the Data Center will provide the researcher with an estimate of the number of days of Data Center services required for customization.

B. Doctoral Students:
Student access to data is limited to doctoral candidates. In addition to the requirements for all researchers, student applicants must have a faculty member sponsor the proposal by writing a letter of support, indicating that the faculty member will assume responsibility for data security as stated in the Data Use Agreement.

Due to resource constraints, students may have access only to existing datasets. The Data Center will not customize data for dissertation research.

C. Grant Proposal Writers:
Anyone who could become eligible to use the data may have access to the codebooks and data dictionaries without going through the proposal process.

The Principal Investigator for the project will work with the Data Center to estimate the time involved for the project and include that estimate as a line-item on the grant proposal budget.
II. Guidelines for Evaluating Proposals

Following the instructions in the Data Use Agreement, proposals should include an abstract stating the goals of the project as well as a description of the project, the data sets and measures required to address the project, and benefits to the Data Center. If the project requires labor from the Data Center beyond providing existing data sets (e.g., creating customized data sets), these activities must be described and justified in the proposal. Most proposals are 5-10 pages long.

Data Center personnel will evaluate the quality and feasibility of proposals and ensure that different scholars do not duplicate each other's efforts. The NCERDC also will set priorities for accommodating different projects using the following guidelines.

A. Mission:
The NCERDC will give higher priority to proposals that meet the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction priorities. Proposals with a different focus are still eligible for data, but if all other factors are equal, proposals fitting the Data Center’s goals of supporting research that is useful for education policy will have a higher priority.

B. Geography:
The NCERDC provides data access to researchers from many different universities. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has determined that eligible researchers must have their primary affiliation at an institution located within the United States.

C. Benefit to the Data Center:
Benefits to the Data Center could include providing funds to the Data Center, providing new data sets to the Data Center, sharing enhanced data files used in project analyses, improving the understanding of the data providing by documenting information about the data, or validating the data against other sources and providing these analysis files to the Data Center.

D. Feasibility:
Projects that require substantial time investment from Data Center personnel may receive lower priority, depending upon the Data Center’s schedule of commitments at the time that the proposal is submitted.

III. Different Kinds of Requests Researchers May Make of the Data Center

A. Existing Products

1. Codebooks:
The Data Center writes codebooks for each data set it receives or creates. These documents inform researchers about the data sets, but they do not contain confidential information nor do they allow researchers to manipulate or analyze the data. Therefore, people may have access to these documents without submitting a proposal to the NCERDC. However, for any other product, researchers must adhere to the procedures described above.
2. Data Sets:
The Data Center can accommodate requests for copies of data sets that currently exist in the Data Center. When a researcher’s application for using these data is approved, the NCERDC will provide access to the requested data through a secure server. Requests for additional years of data can be made as addenda to an approved application. However, requests for additional data files may require submission of a new proposal.

B. New Products

1. Customized Data Sets:
A researcher might want the Data Center to merge, concatenate, or subset various existing files. Although this type of request requires some programming from the Data Center, it does not raise new confidentiality concerns. However, a researcher who wants a customized data set will have to explain why it is necessary for the Data Center to alter the data sets rather than having the researcher alter the data sets. A fee for customization may apply.

2. Creating New Data Sets Based on Matching Names and other Identifying Information:
In this case, a researcher might conduct a survey of students in one school and want to match the survey to some of the Data Center data. This type of request raises additional confidentiality concerns because the researcher already knows the identity of the students. Such requests will only be considered if the researcher has written documentation of consent to access student academic records, and the consent process is approved by the NCERDC and the researcher’s IRB. If this condition is met, and in consultation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the Data Center will use identifying information from the researcher’s data to match that file to Data Center data and provide a dataset in which researchers are able only to identify their study participants.

If researchers wish to use only de-identified data from other administrative data files, or data records for a sub-group of students, such as students enrolled in a specific curriculum program, the researchers should request those files directly from the administrative data source, specifying the need for identifiers that would permit the Data Center staff to match those individual records to student records in the NCERDC data. The researchers would then receive an encrypted linked file that would not permit identifying individual students. Requests of this type will be considered on a case by case basis, reviewed carefully for confidentiality concerns, and may be subject to separate review and approval by NCDPI.

All researchers will have signed the Researcher Confidentiality Agreement in which they promise not to try to identify any individual. Projects that involve matching data from external sources are the most labor-intensive for the Data Center to undertake, and will require the researcher to offset Data Center costs. An estimate of the customization fee will be provided to the applicant when a project description has been submitted to the Data Center.