

For use of NCERDC data files, the investigator, research staff, and receiving institution agree to the following conditions:

I. Eligibility Requirements for Investigators and Receiving Institutions

NCERDC data are released only for research use. Therefore, all investigators must have their primary affiliation with an institution that meets the criteria outlined below in order to be eligible to receive NCERDC data.

A. Receiving institutions must:

- Be an institution of higher education, a nonprofit research organization, or a government agency located within the United States;
- Have a demonstrated record of using sensitive data according to commonly accepted standards of research ethics; and
- Have an established Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Review Committee or equivalent institution-level body to review proposals for research using sensitive data.

B. Graduate students:

As part of its mission, the Data Center will provide data to students for doctoral dissertation or masters' thesis research. These researchers must:

- Be enrolled in an advanced degree program at an eligible institution;
- Submit a proposal and complete all steps indicated in the Data Use Agreement;
- Have a faculty member sponsor that proposal by writing a letter of support, indicating that the faculty member assumes responsibility for data security as stated in the NCERDC-approved data security plan. Due to resource constraints, students may have access only to existing datasets. The Data Center will not customize data for student research.

II. Research Proposal Requirements

All researcher requests must provide to the Data Center a written description of the research project including: an abstract, goals, significance, specific research questions, analysis plan, and description of how the requested data files and measures will be used for addressing this project plan. The abstract (approx. 250 words) should include the title of the project, names of investigators, and funding source (or proposed funding source). The abstract should state the goals of the project and the Data Center's role in meeting those goals. If the project requires labor from the Data Center beyond access to existing data files (e.g., creating customized data), these activities must be described and justified in the proposal. Most proposals are 5-10 pages long. Proposals should include the data request form, summarizing the intended use of each requested file.

III. Data Security Plan Requirements

All applications for NCERDC data access must include a Data Security Plan, outlining the measures that will be taken to ensure that no persons, other than those authorized by the signed agreement, can access the contents of the NCERDC data files. This data protection plan applies to data files supplied by the NCERDC, copies made by the research team, and any new data derived from the restricted data.

“Derived data” include subsets of cases or variables, as well as numerical or other transformations of variables from the original data.

The plan also should include a discussion of the computing environment in which the data will be managed, analyzed, stored, and transmitted among research team members. The investigators must address in detail the security measures that will be implemented for protection of these restricted data. The NCERDC requires that the original de-identified data files, and all resulting temporary and derived data files, must be stored on a secure network server with protections and restrictions appropriate for sensitive data. *External devices (such as laptops or hard drives) and cloud storage options (such as Box or Google Drive) do not meet the Data Center security requirements.*

Specific guidelines for preparing the Data Security Plan are outlined in Attachment 1.

IV. Institutional Review Board Requirement

The NCERDC requires that the investigator submit a copy of the document, signed by the receiving institution’s Institutional Review Board, approving the research project and acknowledging that these data require human subjects protection. Although research using NCERDC data does not involve interaction with human subjects, the level of detail of these data and the Data Center’s strict compliance with FERPA regulations require that we secure institutional commitment to safeguarding confidentiality of these data files. Therefore, a certificate of IRB exemption from review is not sufficient to meet this requirement (an expedited level of review is acceptable). The IRB also must approve the procedures for the secure use and storage of the data described in the researcher’s Data Security Plan. Documentation of annual IRB renewal also is required for continued data access.