

**CMS Office of Accountability**  
**Research Application Guidelines**

**Process and Timeline**

- The CMS Office of Accountability [Conducting Research in CMS](#) web page includes a link to download the research application form and also includes more information on the application process.
- After the application has been reviewed, you will be emailed a list of questions/comments.
- The review panel will conduct a final review of the responses from the researcher and make a final decision at the following research review panel meeting.
- Once the panel of reviewers has made a decision on your study, you will receive an email from Susie Freije.
- If approved, the email will include a letter of approval and a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) created by CMS Office of Accountability and signed by the Chief Accountability Officer. You or the appropriate person from your university/organization should sign the DSA and return a copy of the entire document to Susie Freije.
- The DSA will include the Excel file of data variables you submitted with your application and only those data variables will be provided.
  - Once you have signed and returned the DSA, you may begin conducting your research study and complete a data request form for the approved data from the Office of Accountability.
- The **research application process** (from initial submission to final decision) typically takes **between 5 and 8 weeks**.
- The **data request process** typically takes between **4 to 6 weeks** (assuming data are available at the time of request).
- **In total a request can take between 5-14 weeks:**
  - ***Without data request: 5-8 weeks***
  - ***With data request: 9-14 weeks.***

**Fees**

- All researchers are required to pay the application fee – CMS employees are not exempt.

**Recruitment**

- School staff cannot suggest or refer specific students/staff to participate in a research study. Recruitment can be school-wide (e.g., the researcher may distribute a letter to all students or staff), and in some instances, can target sub-groups. If, for example, only male teachers or students in self contained classrooms are eligible participants, it would be allowable to make the announcement only to those groups. Staff can be recruited, for example, by posting fliers in common spaces (e.g., the teachers' lounge) or in their mailboxes with information on how to contact the researcher if they are interested in participating.
- Participation for district staff, school staff, students, and parents is voluntary even after the research application is approved. Approval by the Office of Accountability is simply permission to request the voluntary participation of participants in the research study.
  - Principals must approve any in-school research activities prior to the recruitment of any participants for the research study. Principals will be informed of the research study's approval by the Office of Accountability, but it is the researcher's responsibility to obtain the approval of the principals.

**Consent and assent forms**

- Active consent/assent is required for all participants. For student participants, you must get documented consent from the parents/guardians and assent from the students themselves (even if the student is 18

years old).

- If the study includes a student survey, a link to a copy of the survey must be included on the consent form.
- Expectations for participants should be clearly identified for each type of participant (student, parent, teacher, etc.) and should include the time commitment (e.g., number of hours per session or data collection/training activity; the number of months during which data will be collected) for each type of participant who receives a consent form.
- If the researcher is requesting identifiable student-level data, the parent consent form must include a line for the parent to provide the student CMS ID#. If the researcher will be requesting identifiable teacher-level data, the teacher consent form must include a line for the teacher to provide the CMS teacher (employee) ID.
- Participants should consent to each activity of the study separately. In particular, consent and assent to videotape should have a separate check box and signature lines on the consent and assent forms (something like this):

**I consent to my child's participation in the science activity:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No **I consent to the use of videotape during the science activity:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**I consent to my child's participation in the baseline and follow-up questionnaires.** \_\_ Yes \_\_ No

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**Parent/Guardian Signature Date**

### **Methods and Literature review**

- We expect a clear, concise, and well-written literature review that is relevant and provides a rationale for the research. The limit for the literature review section is 1500 words (approximately three pages).

### **Data Collection**

- Data collection activities involving CMS students or staff (i.e., surveys, interviews, and focus groups) must occur during non-instructional times or after the regular workday.
- Research cannot take place in the school where the researcher is currently employed.
- District-level staff may not conduct research that includes interviews, observations, surveys, or focus groups of peers or subordinates.
- All data must be requested from the Office of Accountability – school employees may not collect, provide, or use any data outside of this request process (this includes student ID #s, student names, rosters, demographics, academic/test data, attendance, discipline data, etc.). This is done to (1) save schools from being overburdened by requests for data that Accountability can provide, and (2) ensure that researchers get accurate information that can be verified.
- **CMS employees cannot retrieve data from the Navigator Portal, PowerSchool, or other CMS sources for research purposes.**
- If you are requesting data not listed on the variables list (that is, not kept within the Office of Accountability), we will review this request on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it is possible for the Office of Accountability and/or another office to provide the data.
- Some student information requires prior parental consent before it can be released if it is identifiable (e.g., student birth date, address). Similarly, to receive identifiable teacher data, (e.g., EVAAS growth scores), teacher consent is required. Please note that the combination of demographic variables can identify students, so demographic variables may need to be limited and/or consent may be necessary for these demographic variables to be provided.

- Surveys and assessments may not be administered during CMS Survey Blackout Dates (refer to Conducting Research in CMS webpage).
- It is our aim to not over-burden school staff with data collection requests. Therefore, CMS rarely approves research studies involving large-scale surveys of students, teachers or other staff, or parents (i.e., greater than 50 employees or 250 students).
- CMS will not approve research studies involving surveys, focus groups, or interviews that exceed 45 minutes per individual.
- CMS only allows three attempts to promote participation in a study: the initial invitation plus two reminder emails or other contacts.
- CMS will not approve any market research studies.
  - If approved, all persons who will be collecting data on school campuses must register for clearance as a volunteer. Details will be provided in the approval letter and in the data-sharing agreement.

### **Data requests**

- If administrative data are required that will not be collected as part of the study, once the research study is approved and a DSA has been signed by CMS and the researcher (or appropriate person at the university/organization), a data request can be submitted to CMS Accountability.
- Please note that the data request process is separate from the research application process.
  - When requesting identifiable student-level data, the researcher will provide an Excel file with columns for student name and CMS Student ID#. When requesting identifiable teacher-level data, the researcher will provide an excel file with columns for teacher name and CMS teacher (employee) ID #. The ID #'s will be provided on the consent forms. No data will be provided for individuals with incorrect or missing CMS ID#'s.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

- Please be aware of the difference between anonymity and confidentiality and be clear about what you expect to guarantee in your study. It is extremely critical that confidential information of students and staff is not disclosed. We expect a plan to address confidentiality to be described in the research proposal application.
- Pseudonyms must be used for the district and schools in all online and print publications and presentations.

### **Data Security and Disposal Plan**

- Federal regulations suggest storing data for a minimum of three years and then disposing of it: Research data must be archived for the longer of (i) three years after the final project closeout or (ii) five years after the final reporting or publication of a project, with original data retained wherever possible. Sponsored research grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements may mandate different retention periods (including state and local sponsors, which generally require retention for six years following the final project closeout).
- Data can only be used for the approved research study and only in accordance with the approved methods. Any future studies using the data must first be approved by the CMS Office of Accountability.

## **MOST COMMON COMMENTS SENT TO RESEARCHERS AFTER REVIEW**

### **Methods and Literature review**

- Provide more information for your decision to \_\_\_\_\_ -> We would like to see your justification for methods, analyses, etc., and do not want to make assumptions about your intent.
  - We expect a clear, concise, and well-written lit review that is relevant and provides a rationale for the

research. The limit for the literature review section is 1500 words (approximately three pages).

- Please include detailed methods and be explicit about the alignment of your research questions, methods, and analysis plan.

#### Consent Forms

- Consent form requires a separate line to consent for audiotaping/videotaping.
- Consent form requires a line to write in the CMS Student ID #. This CMS ID # is required to request any student-level data or teacher-level data (If no data will be requested, CMS ID # is not required). Parent/guardian must provide CMS ID # for students on the consent form. School staff and the Office of Accountability will not provide CMS ID #s for students.
- Consent form must provide a “No” option for any activity.
- Consent form must include check boxes if multiple activities are included in the study. I consent for my child to participate in the *Technology Rules!* Study \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I consent for my child to participate in the lesson \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I consent for my child to participate in the survey \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I consent for my child to participate in the focus group \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I consent for my child to participate in the interview \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

#### Data Requests

- All data must be requested from the Office of Accountability – school employees may not collect, provide, or use any data outside of this request process (this includes student ID #s, student names, rosters, demographics, academic/test data, attendance, discipline data, etc.). If you are requesting data not listed on the variables list (that is, not kept within the Office of Accountability), we will review this request on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it is possible for the Office of Accountability and/or another office to provide the data.
- Student-level free and reduced lunch data are not available.
- School-level free and reduced lunch data are not available after 2013-14. An alternate data source is available for years after 2013-14 but is not comparable to previous years. This can be provided upon request and approval.
- Pseudonyms must be used for all participants, schools, and the district.
- Consent is required to provide aggregate data for groups smaller than 10.
- End-of-year test data is not available until we receive the final file from the state, which is typically in October.
- CMS cannot provide any College Board or National Student Clearinghouse data.
- CMS will not provide publicly available data. Please see our [Resources Page](#) for a list of publicly available data.

**In sum, denials are often the result of the details (or lack of details). Many studies that are denied are done so after one round of comments from the panel and responses from the researcher, meaning that the study is not immediately denied based on the general premise or topic. They are often denied because the researcher did not sufficiently justify their proposed methods and/or the research questions did not align with the methods and planned analyses.**