

**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.
- The research review panel meets monthly (dates posted on the website) and will review all applications that are complete and received approximately 10 days prior to review panel meetings (dates posted on the [website](#)).
- 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.

- **If you are not conducting research in at least three schools, you are required to provide a detailed explanation outlining why you are requesting to complete the project in fewer than three schools. Specifically, explain why the study cannot be done in three schools and provide evidence to support that argument. Not including this information in the application is likely to delay the application process or lead to automatic denial.**

**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

\_\_\_\_\_  
**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.
- Data should be collected from a minimum of three CMS schools to maximize the value and generalizability of the study. The only exception to this guideline that will be considered is if the researcher is working with a small and/or unique population that is located at only one school (i.e., students with a unique disability located in a unique setting). The researcher must provide a detailed rationale for using only one school and must demonstrate that research could not be conducted at multiple schools. Researcher convenience or convenience sampling is not an acceptable rationale. Failure to provide a rationale may delay approval of your study or lead to automatic denial.
- 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



- 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.**