

Confidentiality Procedures

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NCES is required by [law](#) to develop and enforce standards designed to protect the confidentiality of individually identifiable respondents. This requirement includes the collection, reporting, and publication of data. The Statistical Standards Program has two major functions in this area. The Program leads the NCES Disclosure Review Board Team, comprised of members from each NCES Division, representatives of the Statistical Standards Program, and a representative from the Census Bureau. This Team reviews disclosure risk analyses conducted by NCES staff and contractors to ensure that data released on public use data files do not place the identity of any individual respondents in jeopardy.

The second major activity in this area is designed to make data that fail the Disclosure Review Board test available on a restricted basis to researchers. NCES pioneered the concept of "[restricted use data licenses](#)," similar procedures are now being used in other Federal statistical agencies. These licenses provide external researchers access to individually identifiable NCES data covered under Federal statutes and regulations by subjecting authorized users to the laws, regulations, and penalties that apply to the NCES use of confidential data. Under the license agreement, authorized users are subject to unannounced inspection visits. The Statistical Standards Program monitors the licensing process and the inspections.

In the spring of 1998 Program staff conducted an analysis of the inspection reports and prepared a report with set of recommendations for improved quality control and increased customer service. This information was shared with NCES Senior Staff and the Advisory Council on Education Statistics, and the Advisory Council endorsed the recommendations. Program staff is currently working to implement the recommendations.



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