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AUTHORSHIP POLICY

Sections:

I. PURPOSE

This section outlines the purpose of this policy.

A. This policy provides guidance to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)[2] staff for determining who qualifies for authorship. Outlined are authorship criteria, guidance for designating groups as authors, determining author order, and assigning appropriate credit in acknowledgments. The policy also outlines roles and responsibilities and summarizes ethical considerations of authorship and the copyright rule for federal employees.

B. This policy should be applied whenever a determination needs to be made about whether a CDC staff member qualifies to be listed as an author.

C. Consult the policy Clearance of Information Products Disseminated Outside CDC for Public Use for guidance about writing, reviewing, and revising information products and obtaining approval for their release outside CDC.

II. ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

A. For the purpose of this policy, the following abbreviations and acronyms apply.

1. **ADS –** Center-level Associate Director for Science (CDC) and Associate Administrator for Science (ATSDR)
2. **ATSDR –** Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
3. **ICMJE –** International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
4. **IRB –** Institutional Review Board

5. **JAMA –** Journal of the American Medical Association
6. **MMWR –** Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
7. **NIOSH –** National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
8. **NIP –** National Immunization Program
9. **OD –** Office of the Director

B. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply.

1. **Author** – Individual who makes substantial contributions to the conception, design, or acquisition of data or analysis and interpretation of data. Also has responsibility for drafting the product or revising it critically for important intellectual content. Approves final version to be published.

2. **Center** – refers to all CDC centers, institute, NIP, ATSDR, and OD staff offices.

3. **Coauthor** – A contributor to the development of an information product who participates in an initial decision about authorship and other contributions early in the process.

4. **First Author** – In addition to having the responsibility of an author or coauthor, this individual also has responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole from inception to publication/distribution.

5. **Plagiarism** – The act of claiming or appearing to claim credit for passages, ideas, or quotations from someone else's work, whether that work was published in print or in electronic media.

III. SCOPE

This policy covers any information product disseminated outside CDC where authorship is being considered for a CDC staff member. It covers information products that (1) list CDC staff members individually or by group name as authors and that (2) are prepared as a part of staff members' federal employment. These products include those written solely by CDC staff or by CDC staff in collaboration with partners, those published or broadcast by CDC, and those developed by CDC but published or broadcast by other organizations. Such information products include, but are not limited to, journal articles, editorials, commentaries, and letters published in scientific journals; book chapters and books; and technical reports. The editorial guideline http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/, governing contributions to the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (*MMWR)*, is also based on this CDC policy.

IV. AUTHORSHIP CRITERIA

A. CDC management should provide opportunities for the development of authorship capability among a wide range of staff members. Centers should also encourage a spirit of collaboration among staff members, as well as with external partners, and should provide opportunities for partners to serve as authors on CDC publications. Centers are encouraged to establish mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding not only authorship but the other numerous essential contributions to

public health science and to the process of developing and disseminating information products.

B. The criteria for determining who qualifies for authorship are based on the "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals," developed by ICMJE and last updated October 2004 (http://www.icmje.org/) (Reference A). As the ICMJE updates the "Uniform Requirements," these criteria will be evaluated and updated as appropriate for CDC's needs.

1. **Determining Who Qualifies for Authorship**

   a. Authorship credit should be based on three conditions, *all of which* must be met:

      (i) Substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;

      (ii) Drafting the information product or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and

      (iii) Final approval of the version to be published.

   b. Acquisition of funding, general supervision of researchers/authors, or review and approval of an information product, by themselves, do *not* justify authorship.

   c. All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. At least one author, usually the first, should take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to publication/distribution.

2. **Determining Author Order**

   The order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the coauthors. Author order should be discussed early and revised as needed. Authors should be prepared to explain the rationale for the order in which authors are listed.

3. **Designating Groups as Authors**

   a. Authorship is increasingly attributed to a group. All members of the group who are named as authors should fully meet the criteria for authorship. Group members who do not meet these criteria should be listed, with their permission, elsewhere.

   b. For published information, designating a group as author complicates indexing, retrieval in searches of electronic databases, and citations. Authors should consider the implications of naming a research group, including the possibility that in some databases, the names of individual authors may not be linked to the publication.

   c. For information products that will appear in journals or other publications, consult the publication for samples of how group authorship is attributed.

d. In general, options for designating a group as author include the following:

(i) Identifying some individuals in the byline as authors who have written "on behalf of" or "for" the named group. The other members of the team may be listed elsewhere.

[Sample byline: X, Y, and Z on behalf of the TEAM investigators]

(ii) Identifying the writing group in the byline, with authors in the writing group listed in a footnote. The other members of the team may also be listed elsewhere.

[Sample byline: Writing Group* for the TEAM investigators]

(iii) Identifying the author group name only in the byline. Elsewhere in the publication, authors should be clearly identified. Other team members who do not qualify for authorship should be listed separately (Reference B).

[Sample byline: The TEAM investigators]

4. Assigning Appropriate Credit in the Acknowledgments Section

An acknowledgment section should recognize contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship. A more specific heading may be used, such as "members of the response team" or "participating investigators," and the functions or contributions described—for example, "collected data" or "provided and cared for study patients." All persons acknowledged must give written permission to the lead author, because a reader may infer their endorsement of the data and conclusions. Financial and material support should be acknowledged.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines author roles and responsibilities; specifically, roles and responsibilities pertaining to planning, research, writing/review/revision, and clearance phases of a project. Consult the policy Clearance of Information Products Disseminated Outside CDC for Public Use for additional guidance about writing, reviewing, and revising information products and obtaining approval for their release outside CDC.

A. Author Roles and Responsibilities

1. Authors no longer employed by CDC should list their current employer in their affiliation note, but if the work was undertaken while at CDC, then a statement to this effect should be included along with their current affiliation.

2. First Author. In addition to meeting the criteria for authorship, first authors have these additional responsibilities:

- Provide leadership for the authorship team in determining author order, establish writing assignments and deadlines for written contributions and coauthor reviews, and ensure an open forum for coauthors to share their concerns and suggestions.

- Compile drafts, distribute them for review, and provide specific direction for reviews and revisions.
- Ensure that all ethical considerations (e.g., IRB review, disclosure of conflicts of interest) have been addressed.
- Ensure complete pre-clearance preparation with a supervisor. (See Clearance of Information Products Disseminated Outside CDC for Public Use.)
- Ensure that CDC clearance has been initiated. (See Clearance of Information Products Disseminated Outside CDC for Public Use.)

3. Coauthors. Contributors to the development of an information product should participate in an initial decision about authorship and other contributions as soon as possible with relation to the development of the product—i.e., when the project begins, when a plan for data analysis is developed, or when an invitation to submit an article is received. Coauthors should participate in setting assignments and deadlines for written contributions and coauthor reviews. Each coauthor should provide assigned written sections and reviews in a timely manner. The authorship team should revise author order as necessary to reflect evolving contributions of team members.

B. Center Office of the Associate Director for Science (ADS) Roles and Responsibilities

1. Implementation, Training, and Mentoring. Each center's ADS should ensure that this policy is implemented and that appropriate staff receive sufficient training and mentoring in CDC's authorship policy and center-specific procedures.

2. Dispute Resolution. The center's ADS should resolve disputes about author designation, author order, or serious delays in the writing/review/revision process if they cannot be resolved at the division or office level. Disputes that cannot be resolved by the center should be taken to the CDC OCSO for final arbitration and ruling.

VI. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure public trust and the credibility of CDC and its staff, authors should avoid the following breaches of ethical principles.

A. Withholding Information

1. CDC authors are ethically obliged to release information immediately (e.g., in the *MMWR*) when required to protect public health. Concerns about future publication in journals should not preclude timely release of information.

2. CDC authors should not withhold relevant information from a publication for the purpose of generating multiple publications from a research project or data set.

B. Redundant Publication

In general, reports of scientific findings should not be submitted to more than one journal at a time for review. Once findings are published, authors of subsequent related publications should make the prospective publisher aware of all directly related reports already published, in press, or submitted for publication. If information is republished, the readers should be made aware of the original report through a footnote or reference. Publication in the *MMWR* of urgent public health information does not typically preclude including information in a subsequent submission to a peer-reviewed journal. However, at the time of submission, the authors should make the journal editors aware of the *MMWR* publication. Further guidance on redundant publication has been issued by the ICMJE in the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.

C. Plagiarism

1. Careful attention to proper attribution is increasingly important in today's electronic document environment, where information or entire passages may be easily inserted—and left in without proper attribution.

2. Plagiarism is included in the federal definition of reportable scientific misconduct. The Chief Science Officer, CDC Office of the Director, is the primary official responsible for all matters related to scientific misconduct at CDC. Refer to the CDC OCSO Web site for information on scientific integrity.

D. Disclosing Conflicts of Interest

1. Objectivity is an important value in science and is the basis for public trust. To ensure the scientific integrity and objectivity of information products authored in whole or in part by CDC staff, it is important to avoid situations in which financial or other interests might compromise or give the appearance of compromising the work.

2. A conflict of interest exists when an author has financial or personal ties to activities that could inappropriately influence the design, conduct, or reporting of scientific work or could influence conclusions drawn from such work (Reference A, Reference C). Financial ties include compensation for services (e.g., consulting fees or honoraria), equity interests (e.g., stocks, stock options, bonds, or other ownership interests), and intellectual property rights (e.g., filed or pending patents, copyrights, and royalties from such rights). Financial relationships to industry can also be more indirect—for example, through spouses or dependent children or from previous employment with a commercial entity.

3. Although financial ties are among the most serious threats to scientific objectivity, other threats include pressures related to scientific advancement, professional competition, recognition from peers, and media attention.

4. Disclosure of financial or other conflicts does not eliminate the potential for bias but rather provides additional information in which the objectivity of the science or information can be evaluated.

5. For CDC information products, authors should comply with HHS/CDC guidelines for disclosing conflicts of interest.

VII. COPYRIGHT

A. Works created by federal employees as part of their official duties cannot be copyrighted in the United States. Upon acceptance of information for publication and receipt of a copyright transfer form from a publisher, federal authors should sign the form where it specifies that they were a federal employee when the work was prepared and thus that there is no copyright to transfer.

> If the publisher does not provide such a form or there is no allowance on the form to sign as a federal employee, then the federal employee should submit the following notice in a signed letter:
>
> *I was an employee of the US Federal Government when this work was conducted and prepared for publication; therefore, it is not protected by the Copyright Act, and copyright ownership cannot be transferred.*

B. If there are multiple authors, some of whom are nonfederal, the federal employee should follow the procedures specified above.

C. Although the content of a publication authored by federal employees may not be copyrighted, some publications (e.g., journals) may copyright the format in which the information is published. This copyright on format may inhibit CDC's ability to freely copy the published information. If the publication is of such a nature that wide distribution is desirable (e.g., guidelines), the authors should seek a license from the publication to freely copy and distribute the information as it was published. This license should be negotiated prior to publication. CDC's Office of the General Counsel is available to assist in this process.

VIII. REFERENCES

A. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals [home page on the Internet]. Philadelphia: International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [updated November 2003; cited December 19, 2003]. Available from http://www.icmje.org/

B. Flanagin A, Fontanarosa PB, DeAngelis CD. Authorship for research groups [editorial]. JAMA. 2002; 288(24)3166-8.

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D. General Administration CDC-GA-2005-06, Clearance of Information Products Disseminated Outside CDC for Public Use. CDC, 2005.

E. Use of Individuals' Initials or Other Identifying Particulars in Publications or Presentation Materials. CDC, 1994.

F. General Administration CDC-GA-1997-01, Guidance for Collaboration With the Private Sector. CDC, February 1997.

G. General Administration CDC-GA-2002-08, Investigating Scientific Misconduct. CDC, October 2002.

H. General Administration CDC-GA-2005-14, CDC/ATSDR Policy on Releasing and Sharing Data. CDC, September 2005.
I. Office of the Chief Science Officer Home Page, CDC. Last updated February 2005.
J. CDC Ethics Program Activity Home Page, CDC. Last updated May 2005.

[1] This policy supersedes General Administration CDC-69, dated 12/1/95 and updated 1/24/02.
[2] References to CDC also apply to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).