

Helpful Tips for RDC Research Proposal Writing

To use NCHS-linked data, Researchers must submit proposals that are detailed enough in their data specifications to permit RDC staff to easily determine what data elements are required. Portions of doctoral proposals or grant applications with appropriate modifications may suffice for the research proposal. A concise guideline of what to include in the research proposal can be found at the RDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/GuidelinesRDC11-8-05.pdf>. Below is a list of general issues to be aware of when writing a RDC research proposal:

- Dates of proposed tenure at the RDC (or use of the remote access system) and source of funding for the proposed project must be addressed in the proposal.
- Clarity is a priority when writing a summary of the data requirements for the proposed research. It will allow the RDC staff to understand the costs associated and feasibility of the proposal. Be sure to :
 1. Clearly identify the cases to be included in the analytic file.
 2. Identify which restricted data variables held by NCHS are to be included in the proposed analysis with the **sources of the data clearly stated** (i.e. name of restricted use file, years of data coverage, and a list of required restricted use variables).
 3. Clearly state any data to be supplied by the approved RDC researcher. Provide the **source and description** of the data:
 - If researcher supplied data is derived from NCHS public use data, provide a list of variable names and a description of the public use record identification number.
 - If NCHS public use data has been transformed into recoded variables, provide the name of the original source variables.
 - If the researcher is providing the RDC with non-NCHS public use data, such as census data, the researcher must provide information regarding the source of the data, how it is collected, a description of the variables, and instructions on how this would be linked to the restricted data files.
 4. Provide as detailed as possible description of the output that the researcher intends to remove from the RDC. This should include table shells, model equations or test statistics. Failure to provide this information usually causes delay in the review process.

- Researchers may prefer to have the RDC create the entire analytic file. If this is the case, then this option must be clearly documented in the proposal.
- For applicants with data files constructed by RDC staff:
 - Applicants should include an appendix with a data dictionary containing a complete listing of the specific data requested with the sources of the analytic data (i.e. specific files and years), cases, variables, matching or linking variables, etc clearly stated.
- For applicants with researcher-supplied data files:
 - Applicants should include an appendix with a data dictionary for the researcher –supplied portion of the data that will be merged with the confidential data. This includes **identifying the source of the data**, variable names, variable codes or ranges, file layout, number of records, and restrictions on NCHS use of the data (currently the RDC policy prohibits release of merged data to anyone other than the prospective researcher).
- For remote-access applicants:
 - Applicants should include an appendix with a description of the computer and e-mail system to be used to receive output from the remote access system as well as the security provisions established for them.
- For student applicants:
 - Applicants should include a letter from the student applicant's department chair or academic advisor stating that student is working under the direction of the department.
- Upon receipt, the Research Proposal will be evaluated by a review committee convened for that purpose. The following criteria apply to proposal review for projects requesting use of NCHS data:
 - Scientific and technical feasibility of the project
 - Availability of resources at the RDC
 - Risk of disclosure of restricted information
 - For projects using NCHS data, whether the proposed project is in accordance with the mission of the NCHS to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people.

Special Note to all applicants: NCHS does not try to determine if proposals are duplicative.