How to Use the National Death Index: Steps in the Process

1. Download the National Death Index (NDI) Application Form from the NDI website: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/ndi.htm. (Allow approximately 2 to 3 months for your application to be reviewed and approved.)

2. If questions arise as you are completing a DRAFT of your NDI Application Form, feel free to call NDI staff at 301–458–4444 about any section of the form.

3. E-mail your **unsigned** NDI Application Form to ndi@cdc.gov. This initial draft submission does **not** need to be accompanied by a document showing that your study has been approved by an Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB).

4. NDI staff will respond by e-mailing your assigned NDI number. Within about 1 week, NDI staff will let you know whether your draft application needs revisions before you submit your **final** application.

5. Express mail your **final**, **signed** NDI Application Form and a current IRB approval document to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). E-mail the NDI staff at ndi@cdc.gov or call 301–458–4444 to confirm that we received your package or to ask questions at any time. Always include your assigned NDI number in your communication.

6. Your final application will be distributed to a 12-member panel for review and comment.

7. While your application is being reviewed, you can begin preparing your study subjects' records for submission on a CD. Carefully follow the specifications in Chapter 2 of this User's Guide. Note: We require that you password-protect your files using any self-decrypting software, such as PointSec, PGP, or WinZip. Call us if you need to make other arrangements for transmitting your data.

8. When your application is approved, an approval package will be sent via regular mail to the Principal Investigator or Project Director appearing on the application form. The package will include a blank **NDI Transmittal Form(s)** and a **Worksheet for Calculating NDI Charges**.

(Contact NDI staff if you would like to be e-mailed the worksheet in Excel format.)

9. Send to NCHS, by overnight delivery, your CD containing a file(s) of study subjects' records. Include a separate NDI Transmittal Form for each file, a Worksheet for Calculating NDI Charges, and your check or purchase order. A check or purchase order must be received by NCHS before we will send you the NDI search results. Credit card payments that do not exceed $1,500 can now be accepted—contact NDI staff to arrange for such payments. (Federal agencies must process a standard NDI interagency agreement in advance of their NDI searches. Checks or purchase orders are not acceptable from federal agencies, but credit card payments of $1,500 or less can be accepted.) Once you have sent in your file(s), e-mail to NCHS your overnight-mail tracking number and the password to open your encrypted file(s).

10. Within about 2 weeks after receiving your file(s), NDI staff will return, by overnight mail, a password-protected CD containing your NDI search results, your original CD, and an **NDI Repeat Request Form** for future searches for the same study. NCHS staff will e-mail to you the overnight-mail tracking number and the password to open your encrypted NDI files.

11. Assess your results to identify the **true** matches using your own assessment criteria or the suggested NDI assessment criteria. (It is your responsibility to determine which, if any, of the possible NDI matches listed is actually the correct match.) You also have the option of purchasing death certificates on your own directly from state vital statistics offices—for all **true** matches, or just to adjudicate selected questionable matches.

If additional NDI searches are needed later for the **same** study or project, first mail to NCHS a signed **NDI Repeat Request Form**. (You will receive a new NDI Repeat Request Form each time you receive your NDI results, but you can also access a blank Repeat Request Form on the NDI website.) You should receive a letter or e-mail approving your repeat request within 2 weeks. You can then submit your new files for your next NDI search in the same manner as the first submission.