# Research Proposal Guidelines

The National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) may provide variables to researchers that are not available in the NPDB public use data file. Please review the [sample reports](https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/software/sampleResponseFiles.jsp) and the [NPDB code lists](https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/software/CodeLists.pdf) to have an idea on what variables exist. A researcher must provide a proposal (including table shells) describing their proposed use of these variable(s). A research proposal should include hypotheses, methodologies, goals, and the public health benefit of the proposed research. NPDB staff will review the request and approve or deny the request for these restricted variables. The NPDB will provide only the variables needed to complete the research outlined in the proposal. The NPDB can only provide data that it has the legal authority to release. Please review the [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/helpCenter/researchAndData.jsp) or contact [**dpdbdatarequests@hrsa.gov**](mailto:dpdbdatarequests@hrsa.gov) for more information.

# Proposal Review

The review process takes approximately *four* to *eight* weeks. The review process is as follows:

1. On receipt of your proposal, a NPDB research team member will review the proposal for completeness and feasibility and will work with you to make any necessary changes.
2. The staff member will distribute the proposal to a Review Committee, which includes NPDB research team members and other internal subject matter experts, and will examine the proposal for:
   * Appropriateness and availability of the chosen data
   * Disclosure risk
   * Technical feasibility
   * Public health benefit and consistency with the data owner’s mission

# Review Criteria

The Review Committee will examine the proposal for:

**Appropriateness and availability of the chosen data**

The data requested can be used to reasonably address the research goals described in the research proposal and **are not already publicly available through other sources**. In addition, the data requested must be available for the NPDB to release and has the legal authority to release.

**Disclosure risk**

The requested data cannot be used alone or in combination with other data to identify any individual or entity, or otherwise link information from the requested data with information in another dataset in a manner that includes the identity of an individual or entity.

**Technical Feasibility**

The individual(s) listed under the Research Team section has demonstrated the ability to perform data analyses pursuant to the research goals described in the research proposal.

**Public health benefit and consistency with NPDB’s mission**

The research proposal constitutes legitimate research that may lead to improvement of public health. Legitimate research for the purposes of this section shall mean a systematic statistical study, conforming to or in accordance with generally accepted scientific standards or principles, and designed to develop or contribute to scientific knowledge.

**Review Committee Decision**

The Review Committee’s decision options include:

* **Approve** 
  + Approval of a proposal does not mean that the NPDB endorses the merit of the proposed research or its substantive, methodological, theoretical, or policy relevance.
  + NPDB approval reflects the judgment that this research, as described in the proposal, is an appropriate use of the requested data and that providing the restricted variable(s) to complete the project is feasible.
  + Approval of a proposal does not explicitly or implicitly guarantee that all output generated by the analysis will be releasable. Output that poses a disclosure risk shall be suppressed.
  + In certain cases, the NPDB may approve a proposal and authorize the release of restricted data but require a collaboration with the requestor to ensure the disclosure risk is reduced or eliminated throughout the lifespan of the project. The NPDB’s involvement in a collaboration may include, but is not limited to, participating in data analyses, merging NPDB data to third-party data sources, and/or reviewing and approving the final tables, figures, and manuscript. The collaboration may result in shared publications.
* **Revise and resubmit** 
  + Often, researchers are asked to revise and resubmit after the first review. If this is the case, we will work with you to help you revise your proposal to comply with our guidelines.
* **Disapprove**
  + Please refer to page 2 for the review criteria that the NPDB Review Committee uses for disapproval.

# NPDB Research Proposal

The research proposal must contain these specific sections:

1. **Coversheet** (see page 6 of this document)

*Include project title and research investigator information.*

1. **Abstract**

*Please limit the abstract to 300 words.*

1. **Background**

*Include a short literature review, no more than 2 pages, focusing on papers that discuss your topic or address the methodology that you plan to use. Please limit your reference list to 10 items or less. Please include previous data analyses with the NPDB public use file.*

1. **Research question(s)**

*Include study purpose, hypotheses, goals, or research questions.*

1. **Public health benefit**

*In one paragraph, how does your research benefit public health?*

1. **Data requirements**
   1. NPDB variable list

* *List the restricted variables you are requesting.*
* *Explain how you will use these variables. For example, if you are requesting zip codes, please indicate how they will be used to compare different data sets, analyze the data, and present the results. Are you requesting zip codes to merge non-NPDB data?* 
  1. Non-NPDB variables

*If you are using data from another source (such as Census, NCHS, AHRQ, Court Records) with NPDB data, please describe the source, list the files, and provide a general description of the data.*

* 1. Merge variables

*What variable(s) will be used to merge the public and restricted NPDB data files?*

*What variable(s) will be used to merge the NPDB data files with any non-NPDB data (e.g., proprietary data)?*

* 1. Software requirements

*What statistical software will you be using?*

1. **Methodology**
   1. Unit or level of analysis and subpopulation(s)

*There can be many levels of analysis, be as detailed as possible. A common example for an analysis of NPDB is where the unit of analysis is the health care practitioner while the subpopulation is Physicians or Dentists. A common example involving geography is when you aggregate malpractice payment reports to the state level so you can compare states with policy A to states with policy B.*

* 1. Merging plan

*Please describe in detail how you plan to merge public and restricted NPDB data files and any non-NPDB data listed in “Merge variables.”*

* 1. Analysis plan

*Please provide an overall analysis plan that specifies what analytic procedures or models you will use, such as descriptive statistics, logistic regression or log-linear modeling, or list specific statistical package procedures.*

1. **Output**
   1. Overview

*Please describe any output that you would like to publish. This section helps the Review Committee assess disclosure risk.*

* 1. Examples/Table shells

*Include detailed examples of table shells, models, and/or graphs. Please indicate the subsample or unit of analysis used in each type of table, model, or graphs.*

* 1. Presentation of results

*Will you present the results in a report, publish in a peer-reviewed journal or newspaper, give as a presentation at a scientific meeting, or use the results for internal policy analysis, etc.?*

* 1. References

*Please limit the list to 10 items or less.*

1. **Other Authors**

*Please list the name and institution for anyone not listed on the coversheet under Research Investigator who will contribute to publications resulting from this project but will not come into contact with the data.*

1. **Prior Research**

*Please cite 3-5 publications or presentations that the research team has authored on this subject matter or using this methodology.*

1. **Confidentiality and data security**

*Please read and sign the confidentiality and data security agreement.*

# NPDB Research Proposal Coversheet

# Research Investigator Information

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Primary Investigator | Co-Investigator |
| Name | Name | Name |
| Email | Email | Email |
| Phone | Phone | Phone |
| Institution | Institution | Institution |
| Mailing Address | Mailing Address | Mailing Address |
| US Citizen? Y or N | Y or N | Y or N |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Advisor (For Students and Post-Docs)** | Other, specify: |
| Name | Name | Name |
| Email | Email | Email |
| Phone | Phone | Phone |
| Institution | Institution | Institution |
| Mailing Address | Mailing Address | Mailing Address |
| US Citizen? Y or N | Y or N | Y or N |

**Authors’ Note**

If NPDB data are used in a publication, please add the following note:

Data utilized in this study were obtained from the National Practitioner Data Bank, which is managed by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Government. HRSA does not endorse any specific products, services, or conclusions described in this manuscript. The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of HRSA or the U.S. Government.

**Recommended Citation**

When describing your methods, please cite the NPDB using the following recommended reference:

Division of Practitioner Data Bank, Bureau of Health Workforce, Health Resources and Services Administration. National Practitioner Data Bank Public Use Data File. Retrieved from <https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/resources/publicData.jsp> on [**DATE ACCESSED**].

**Confidentiality and Data Security**

The individual(s) listed under the Research Investigator section agree to neither identify nor try to identify any individual/entity contained in the data; not to publish information that could potentially identify any individual; use data only for approved projects; adhere to NPDB data release standards; securely store data to maintain their confidentiality; and appropriately dispose of data to ensure confidentiality when the approved project is completed. The latter condition precludes submitting the data provided to the Research Team to any organization, entity, or individual, including but not limited to supplemental data as part of manuscript submission to a scientific journal.

*I have read the* ***Confidentiality and Data Security Section****, and I agree to abide by all rules and restrictions of the NPDB.*

Primary Investigator: Signature: Date:

Co-Investigator: Signature: Date: