

Office of Children and Families' External Research Committee Guide for Study Submission

The Office of Children and Families' (OCF) is committed to using research and data-informed decision making to promote safe children, strong families, and supported schools and communities. OCF's External Research Committee (ERC), which is comprised of research staff from OCF's Division of Performance Management & Technology and legal staff from the City's law department, supports this work by actively engaging in research partnerships with external institutions. The goal of the ERC is to facilitate research that produces actionable findings that directly benefit families and align with OCF's goals and priorities¹.

This document provides guidance on the process for submitting a study proposal and conducting research with OCF and associated stakeholders. Successful applicants should justify how they plan to partner with OCF to produce concrete deliverables that support the following priorities: safe children, strong families, and supported schools and communities.

Studies in Need of Approval

OCF requires approval for studies proposing to use either primary data collection (e.g., surveys, interviews) or administrative data from OCF or its contracted agencies. Studies that require approval include those that:

- Involve persons receiving services directly, indirectly, or funded by OCF (including focus groups, surveys, and interviews as well as administrative data)
- Involve persons employed by OCF or any of its contracted agencies (e.g., OST, Community Schools, PHLPreK)
- Use any form of OCF or contracted agency data (e.g., OST, Community Schools, PHLPreK)

Overview of Approval Process

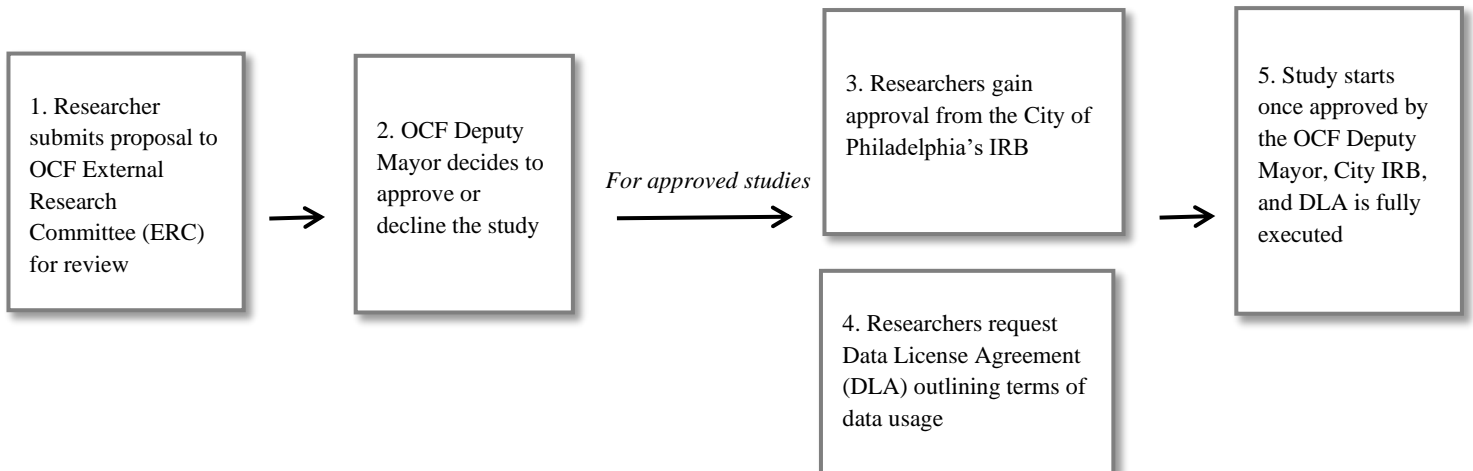
It is preferable that the researcher request approval for their study **before** writing research grants and proposals. If a grant is received and includes using departmental data or other information, OCF cannot guarantee that it will approve the study and data request.

¹ <https://www.phila.gov/departments/office-of-children-and-families/>

Studies submitted to OCF for approval must go through the following steps:

1. Review by the External Research Committee (ERC)
 - a. The researcher submits the Proposed Study Application to the ERC.
2. Written approval from the OCF Deputy Mayor
 - a. The ERC submits a recommendation to the OCF Deputy Mayor, who makes the final decision to approve or decline the study.
3. Approval from Philadelphia’s Department of Public Health (PDPH) IRB²
 - a. Once the OCF Deputy Mayor has approved the study, the researcher must submit an application to the City’s IRB.
4. Data License Agreement (DLA) from the City’s Law Department.
 - a. Once the OCF Deputy Mayor has approved the study, the ERC assists the researcher with applying for a DLA. The study cannot begin until approval is obtained in writing from the OCF Deputy Mayor, the PDPH IRB, and a DLA is fully executed.

As shown in the figure below, steps 3 and 4 may occur concurrently.



Ongoing Partnership

Once the study is approved by all relevant entities and has begun, the ERC will remain an active partner throughout the research process, as outlined in the study proposal. This partnership may include activities such as study recruitment, data collection, analyses, interpretation of findings, and/or dissemination of results. All anticipated reports, publications, and presentations resulting from the study should be specified in the researcher’s Proposed Study Application.

² <https://www.phila.gov/health/commissioner/IRB.html>