

External Research Committee (ERC): Frequently Asked Questions

Whom may I contact from the External Research Committee (ERC) with specific questions?

- You may contact Samantha Rivera-Joseph PhD, Director of Implementation Science, in DHS' Division of Performance Management & Technology. She may be reached by email at Samantha.Rivera.Joseph@phila.gov

What studies must be submitted for approval from DHS?

- All research, surveys, interviews, evaluations, or studies using either primary data collection or administrative data
- All research that includes persons receiving services directly, indirectly, or funded by DHS (including focus groups, surveys, and interviews as well as administrative data)
- All research that includes persons employed by DHS or any of its contracted agencies (e.g., CUAs, providers)
- All research that uses any form of DHS or contracted agency data (e.g., CUAs, providers)

What studies must also be submitted to the City of Philadelphia's Health Department Institutional Review Board?

- All research that involves human subjects or DHS data, whether from DHS directly or its contracted agencies or their subcontractors
- Proposals for research that will result in publication and/or conference presentation
- Proposals that have been approved by the host institution's IRB should still be submitted to the PDPH IRB.

Should studies be approved by DHS prior to submission to the City of Philadelphia's Health Department Institutional Review Board?

- Yes, the City of Philadelphia Health Department IRB requests that you obtain departmental approval for your study prior to submission.
- Please copy the DHS ERC (Samantha.Rivera.Joseph@phila.gov) on any correspondence to the IRB.
- **Be sure to read the entire IRB website at:**
<http://www.phila.gov/health/commissioner/IRB.html>

Is a Data License Agreement (DLA) needed?

- In most instances, a Data License Agreement (DLA) is needed. If you are unclear about needing a DLA, please contact the ERC (Samantha.Rivera.Joseph@phila.gov).

- If a DLA is required, the data will not be released unless/until the DLA is fully executed.

Do I need the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services approval?

- Your study may require the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) approval. The ERC will inform you if this is necessary. The City's Law Department will submit the required documentation once your study is approved by DHS.

What is the process for DHS approval?

- To gain approval for your research you will need to submit a study application to DHS. Please submit all study documents as one file. Please make sure you sign the application and submit the required documentation for approval from DHS.
- After you submit your application, the ERC will review it and will provide a recommendation to the DHS Commissioner. If the DHS Commissioner approves your study, s/he will issue a formal, signed letter of approval that will be emailed to you. A letter of notification will also be emailed to you if your study is not approved.
- Once the Commissioner approves your study, the ERC will determine if further approval by PA DHS' OCYF is required and will assist you with obtaining approval if needed. Your study must also be approved by the City's IRB, and a DLA must be issued for your study to begin. A full explanation of the approval process can be found in the ERC Guide.

Can the approval letter be withdrawn?

- Yes, DHS can withdraw approval of the study at any time.
- If the City's IRB determines a violation in protocol, your study can be withdrawn.

Do I need to copy the ERC when I contact other departments and/or submit information?

- The ERC is a collaboration between DHS's Performance Management and Technology, the Law Department and the Philadelphia Health IRB. When emailing any of the stakeholders in the study, please always include the ERC.
- If your research involves data or human subjects served by other City of Philadelphia departments, separate approval will be needed by those City departments. The ERC should be copied on correspondence with those departments.