

External Research Committee (ERC): Frequently Asked Questions

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

- For any questions about the application process you can email the general inbox OCF_ERC@phila.gov and one of the members of the Committee will respond to your question(s) directly.

What studies must be submitted for approval from the Office of Children and Families (OCF)?

- 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 OCF or DHS (including focus groups, surveys, interviews, and administrative data)
- All research that includes persons employed by OCF or any of its contracted agencies (e.g., OST programs, Community Schools, PHLPreK).
- All research that uses any form of OCF or contracted agency data (e.g., OST programs, Community Schools, PHLPreK).

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

- All research that involves human subjects or OCF data, whether from OCF 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 OCF 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 OCF ERC (OCF_ERC@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 (OCF_ERC@phila.gov).
- If a DLA is required, the data will not be released unless/until the DLA is fully executed.

What is the process for OCF approval?

- To gain approval for your research you will need to submit a study application to OCF. Please submit all study documents as one file. Please make sure you sign the application and submit the required documentation for approval from OCF.
- After you submit your application, the ERC will review it and will provide a recommendation to the OCF Deputy Mayor. If the OCF Deputy Mayor 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.
- 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, OCF 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 OCF's Division of 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.