

Policy 51 Requests To Do Research

**STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

Policy: 51

Subject: Requests To Do Research
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Recommended for approval by:		Authorized By:	
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Date	Signature	Date

1. Authority:

1.1.

2. Purpose:

2.1 To provide a system for evaluating research requests, monitoring the progress of approved projects, and obtaining the results of completed research.

3. Applicability/Accessibility

3.1

4. Policy

4.1 POLICY STATEMENT

4.1.1 Requests by individuals not associated with the Department of Corrections to conduct research studies and surveys on departmental operations and the correctional population have-greatly increased during the past few years. While the Department encourages research in the field of Corrections and supports professional studies of departmental operations, it recognizes a clear need to control such activity. The Department should only provide assistance to studies which are not disruptive of normal operations and that will provide some potential benefit. To fairly consider all requests, it is necessary to

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establish a system to screen research requests and to monitor on going research projects.

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4.3 RESEARCH PROPOSALS

4.3.1 Proposals to conduct research, whether by independent researchers or by researchers working- at the request: of the Department, must be submitted in writing to the Commissioner of Corrections and include, at a minimum, the following information on the research design.

4.3.1.1 Identification of the individual or group proposing the research project and the individual or group who is the sponsor.

4.3.1.2 The statement of purpose, i.e., exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory research.

4.3.1.3 The specific population to be studied or unit of analysis.

4.3.1.4 Description of research methods to be employed (e.g., survey research involving the administration of questionnaires by an interviewer who will contact a sample of respondents from the population read the items and record the answers).

4.3.1.5 The project timetable.

4.3.1.6 The motivations of the researchers.

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4.3.2 The Commissioner will forward all proposals to the appropriate division(s) for preliminary review and recommendations.

4.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

4.4.1 With increased frequency, social researchers are being commissioned to engage in specific research project, usually of an applied nature. Contracted research typically is predicated on a need for specific facts and findings with policy implications, to determine future courses of action on the basis of research results. The Department must consider the social value of the proposed. Research, as well as any ethical issues that it may involve.

4.4.1.1 The potential benefit of the research should justify the Department's allocation and investment of its resources needed to complete the research.

4.4.1.2 The research project must be conducted pursuant to Department Policy 266 - Security, Privacy, and Confidentiality of Offender Information.

4.4.1.3 The interest and abilities of the individual or group proposing the research should be adjudged professionally adequate to execute the methods and objectives described in the proposal.

4.4.1.4 Ethical norms regarding voluntary participation, no harm to the people being studied, anonymity and confidentiality, and honesty in data analysis and reporting must be considered.

4.4.1.5 If the research is medical or physiological in nature, it must conform with Department Policy 481 - Health Care Services.

4.5 AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTIES

4.5.1 If, based on the recommendations of the reviewing division(s), the Commissioner deems the research to be qualified, he or his designate will notify the person(s) conducting the research, as well as the division(s) in which the research will be performed.

4.5.2 Whereas, the successful completion of research requires access to certain privileged information maintained by the Department and, whereas, the Department has a primary obligation to guard against public disclosure of sensitive information relating to offenders under its care and custody and its

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security and treatment programs, the Department and the research project shall enter into a legal agreement.

4.5.3 The written agreement (Appendix A) will specify, where appropriate,

4.5.3.1 The project schedule,

4.5.3.2 Review dates,

4.5.3.3 The nature of the information to be retrieved and/or produced via the project,

4.5.3.4 The stipulation that the Commissioner shall receive any special reports, publications, etc.

4.5.3.5 The responsibilities of both the Department and the research project as outlined below.

4.6 DEPARTMENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.6.1 The Department will permit access to its records under controlled conditions, for the purpose of conducting research into subject areas related to correctional treatment and programs.

4.6.2 The Department shall not be responsible for the supervision of the research project but shall reserve its right to review and/or limit the scope of the research. Further, the Department retains its right to intercede at any point during the research if it is deemed potentially threatening to either the safety or security of the human subjects or others.

4.6.3 The Department will cooperate fully with the project in its endeavor provided such assistance.

4.7 RESEARCH PROJECT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.7.1 The project will be permitted access to departmental criminal history or case record information for the sole purpose of collecting data for an approved study. Such access, however, does not extend to any other person associated indirectly with the study project, nor shall it interfere with or be disruptive of the operations of the Department.

4.7.2 The project shall only contact a Department client/ offender after obtaining first a signed consent to interview since all interviews, whether with staff or offenders, are strictly voluntary.

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- 4.7.3** The project, in careful consideration of the possible consequences for human beings, shall protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger, or deprivation and shall disclose such confidences to the Department only for compelling professional reasons.
- 4.7.4** Any reports, interim findings, or other written documents produced in conjunction with, or as a result of, the research project, shall:
 - 4.7.4.1** Reveal only aggregate data, i.e., mass information formed by gathering specific findings and observations and describing some larger group or explaining some abstract phenomena.
 - 4.7.4.2** Contain a statement that it is not necessarily the position of the Department.
 - 4.7.4.3** Contain a statement that the Department is not necessarily in agreement with any interpretations drawn or conclusions reached.
- 4.7.5** The project shall furnish the Department with all reports, including a final report, that results from its research.

4.8 MINOR REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

4.8.1 Public Information

4.8.1.1 Any person (including the news media) who identifies him/herself and requests information about a particular adult offender, identified by name, currently under the jurisdiction of the Department, may be given only the following information: .

4.8.1.1.1 Name confirmation,

4.8.1.1.2 Current location - facility or probation and parole field office, 3. Current status (probation, parole, detained, committed, or not in correctional system), current offense, and sentence,

4.8.1.1.3 Date of admission and release.

4.8.2 College Students or Other Interested Parties

4.8.2.1 Occasionally, students at a college or university, or other individuals interested in the correctional system, request aggregate data from the Department.

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- 4.8.2.2** The Department recognizes students as a special category of researchers who must accomplish projects to complete papers, theses, or dissertations. The Department will make an effort to accommodate these individuals provided, however, that such support does not disrupt normal operations nor drain departmental resources.
- 4.8.2.3** Students from a specific region should submit a written proposal outlining their research design to the respective facility superintendent or probation and parole district manager. The types, uses, time covered, and sources of the needed information must be clearly stated.
- 4.8.2.4** The proposal will be evaluated and permission granted to access specified information at reasonable times and under such conditions or advance notice as the superintendent or district manager may require. At the discretion of the superintendent or district manager, requests to do research may be forwarded to the Director of Research and Planning for evaluation and technical assistance.
- 4.8.2.5** Each facility superintendent and probation and parole district manager is responsible for ensuring that the intent and specifics of Department Policy 266 is strictly adhered to when granting such requests.
- 4.8.2.6** Students not conducting independent research but who are under the auspices of an organized research or academic agency or institution will be classified as a research project and subject to all the formalities and prescriptions contained within this policy.

4.9 PENALTY FOR VIOLATIONS

- 4.9.1** Any researcher, contractual or independent, who violates the intent or specifics of this policy shall be subject to any legal action which is appropriate. Any applicable law pertaining to violations of this policy shall be enforced.

5. Training Method

5.1.

6. Quality Assurance Processes

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6.1.

7. Financial Impact:

7.1

8. References

Ethical Principles of Psychologists

The Principles of Medical Ethics, With Annotations Especially Applicable to Psychiatry

Code- of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers

45 CFR Part 46, Final Regulations Amending Basic HHS Policy

For the Protection of Human Research Subjects

Part II, Exemption of Certain Research and Demonstration

Projects From Regulations for Protection of Human-Research Subjects

Department Policy 266 - Security, Privacy, and Confidentiality of Offender Information

Department Policy 481 - Health Care Services

Department Policy 484 - Dental Policy

Department Policy 681 - Alcohol and Drug Services

Department Policy 701 - Mental Health Services

NOTE: This policy shall be interpreted pursuant to Department Policy 266 - Security, Privacy, and Confidentiality and the laws of the State of Vermont.

9. Responsible Director and Draft Participants