

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS USING DATA ORIGINALLY SOURCED FROM BIRTH OR DEATH CERTIFICATES

California law places restrictions on the use and distribution of data collected on the birth certificates or death certificates (collectively referred to below as “birth and death data”). Prior to submitting a request for CPHS approval of your research project, please review the following to ensure that your use of the birth and death data is in full compliance with California law.

1. Only the State Registrar, housed in the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), may release birth and death data for research purposes. If you are requesting CPHS review of a research study that contains any birth or death data, in whole or in part, and that data was not provided directly to you by CDPH, you must contact CDPH before submitting your protocol for CPHS review. To determine if your use of the data complies with all applicable statutes, please contact CDPH’s Health Information and Research Section at HIRS@cdph.ca.gov. In such cases, CPHS will request that you provide a letter of support from CDPH stating that it has reviewed your proposed use of the birth or death data and the proposed use complies with California law.
2. Any use of birth and death data must be reviewed and approved by the Vital Statistics Advisory Committee (VSAC) prior to release of the data by CDPH. Before submitting your protocol for CPHS review, please complete a VSAC application [here](#) and attach that application to your CPHS protocol submission. CPHS will not review research projects using birth or death data without a VSAC application.
3. CPHS will not approve protocols, without prior CDPH approval, that propose to create linked data files or registries using birth or death data if the intention of the linked data file or registry is to share birth or death data with researchers not named in the original CPHS protocol. Researchers proposing to share linked data files or registries containing birth or death data with other researchers are directed to obtain approval from CDPH prior to applying to CPHS by contacting CDPH’s Health Information and Research Section at HIRS@cdph.ca.gov. In such cases, CPHS will request that you provide a letter of support from CDPH stating that it has reviewed your proposed use of the birth or death data and the proposed use complies with California law.
4. Per agreement with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), any research study using birth and death data must submit a new research application to CDPH through the VSAC process every five years for the duration of the study. CPHS continuing approval for research projects of greater than five years duration will be contingent on receiving a new VSAC approval letter for the project every five years.