GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Individuals and organizations may apply to conduct research studies in the schools and departments of Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) provided that the research has value, is feasible, meets District guidelines, and does not interfere unduly with the operations of the affected schools or departments. For studies involving students and school sites, initial authorization must be obtained from the District’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) located at the Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment. The Division of Instruction and the appropriate principal or site supervisor must then approve the project before any contact is made with the subjects. Priority will be given to studies that will yield results of value to the District. Requests will be evaluated against potential benefits to the district and students.

Prospective researchers are encouraged to file their applications and documents electronically using the Adobe portable document file (pdf) format for quicker response time. See timelines under “Conditions for Obtaining Authorization”

The Superintendent or Designee may decline, or approve the proposed project for a period of one year or less. To extend data collection into a second school year, the researcher(s) must re-obtain approval from the Superintendent or designee. Researchers shall certify that they will use no school, district, or persons’ names in the publications of findings without the expressed written approval of the Superintendent or designee.

CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING AUTHORIZATION

All persons conducting research in the FUSD must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Researchers are encouraged to submit applications for studies that align to district goals and priorities (as presented on the district website).
2. Researchers must obtain active, informed consent from all research participants or their parents/guardians in the case of minor students (students under the age of 18). Copies of all consent forms must be submitted to the IRB prior to the commencement of the research.
3. Researchers must obtain prior written parental consent when study involves the following information about the student or student’s family
   a) Political affiliations or beliefs
   b) Mental or psychological problems
   c) Sexual behaviors or attitudes
   d) Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
   e) Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom students have close family relationships
   f) Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of teachers, lawyers, physicians, and ministers
   g) Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs
   h) Income
4. Researchers must notify parents/guardians before collecting “directory” information about students and allow a reasonable amount of time for parents/guardians to request that the school or district not disclose directory information about them.
5. Researchers will not be allowed to collect information from student records without a written permission from the parent/guardian.
6. Access to individual staff personnel records is expressly forbidden.
7. Student, staff, and organizational units cannot be identified by name or symbols that make them readily identifiable by readers of any reports or data-collection documents.
8. Data collected from FUSD, its students, teachers, administrators, and other employees may be used only for the purposes stated in the Application to Conduct Research. These data may not be transferred to others without expressed permission of the District.
9. Researchers are responsible for translating instruments and consent forms when necessary into other languages.
10. Researchers are obligated to submit a report of the study’s principal findings to the Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment at the conclusion of the study prior to the release or submittal to additional parties.
11. Requests that include student level data will be evaluated against their potential benefit to the district and students.
a) Requests for student level data will be delivered utilizing unique, anonymized IDs to protect student privacy.
b) For approved requests that are labor intensive a fee for services may be required.
c) If research activities result in a direct and substantial benefit to individual students that could not be obtained through other means, the district may consider partnering with the researcher and would result in a memorandum of understanding, signed by all relevant parties to ensure student privacy and appropriate use of data.

12. Researchers are responsible for proper data management and may be held liable in the event of a breach. Researchers are required to:
   a) Protect student data using industry standard mechanisms (encryption, passwords, etc.)
   b) Report lost or stolen data to Fresno Unified within 72 hours of incident
   c) Destroy or return original data and working documents back to Fresno Unified at completion of study

13. The District retains the right to revoke study approval at any time if conditions or guidelines are violated, or in the best interest of students or staff.

APPLICATION PROCESS

All persons interested in conducting research within the Fresno Unified School District must submit a document comprising the following:

I. Title of Study

II. Abstract
The abstract should be a one-paragraph summary of the protocol, including potential benefits, potential risks, and risk management procedures.

III. Protocol
The protocol is a statement of the objective of the proposed study, methods to obtain the stated objectives, and the investigator's responsibilities toward the human subjects involved in the research. The protocol should contain the following information, as applicable, in the given order. A protocol can usually be written in 2-3 single spaced pages.

A. Purpose and Background
This section contains information pertaining to the background of the study and the relation of the proposed research to previous scientific investigations in the field. The amount of background information depends on the nature of the study and the risks involved in participation. For interview and questionnaire procedures, a reference or two to the literature or a brief statement of the problem should be sufficient. For medical research, the section should include relevant laboratory and animal studies and clear justification for the participation of human subjects at this stage of the investigation. The specific aims and hypotheses of the investigation should be discussed, along with the relevance of the hypotheses to previous work. If specific hypotheses are not being tested, then a brief description should be given of the questions to be answered or the possible information to be gained. Also, if the investigation is a pilot or exploratory one, this section should include a discussion of the way in which the information obtained will be used in future studies.

B. Subjects
This section should include an estimate of the number of subjects involved, as well as a statement describing the population from which they will be derived, and how they will be recruited. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion should be specified. Effects of sample size on risks and risk management will be considered by the RRC. Justification should be provided for the use of subject groups whose capacities to provide informed consent may be absent or limited. A frank discussion of potential problems involving such subject groups should be given.

C. Methods
The Methods section should provide a detailed description of all procedures involving human subjects for the purposes of research. Recruitment procedures, which ensure voluntary participation, and experimental procedures should be specified. Tests, questionnaires, and interview guides should be identified and described, and a copy of each should be appended to the protocol. If the final instruments have not yet been developed, drafts or representative samples should be submitted. In cases where information given to subjects as to the procedures and purposes of the study would invalidate the objectives, the investigator should report to the Committee reasons for not informing subjects of the procedures. Alternatives to deception should be considered. Devices or activities that are not customarily encountered by the subjects in their daily living, or unusual application of devices or activities, must be described in detail. Additionally, included must be an itemized list of data points that will be collected or requested.

D. Timeline
A tentative time schedule for the procedures with and without human subjects should be provided. The schedule should include frequency and estimated duration of each procedure, as well as intervals between procedures. The precise location for each procedure should be specified.
E. Potential Benefits
Discussion of potential benefits should be an evaluation of the benefits to individual subjects, the school, department, district, the population from which they are drawn, society or humanity in general. Benefits are particularly important if participation places subjects at risk.

F. Potential Risks
Potential risks to human subjects must be identified and discussed. Deleterious effects may be psychological, social, physical, economic, or legal. Some research involves neither risks nor discomfort, but violations of normal expectations. Such violations should be specified. If no risks are anticipated, a statement to that effect should be made.

G. Management of Risk
If potential risks have been identified, procedures for minimizing the potential risks must be described. Risk management procedures range from those applicable to a group to those applicable to an individual subject. Special attention should be given to issues of confidentiality. If it is important to collect identifiable information about subjects, the rationale should be provided in the protocol and the mechanism for maintaining confidentiality must be specified, including coding and reporting procedures, storage and access of identifiable data, and approximate date identifying data will be destroyed. If confidentiality has been promised and case histories or anecdotes will be reported, explanation should be given on how narratives will avoid identifying subjects through description of unique information about them. Management of risk does not change the classification of a study from "risk" to "no risk".

H. Subject Compensation
Subjects may be reasonably reimbursed for their participation in an experiment or a study. Compensation to subjects should never be such as to constitute coercive inducement.

I. Academic Qualifications
The final section of the protocol should indicate the academic or professional qualifications of the investigators. For procedures requiring special skills on the part of the investigators, licensure, accreditation, and/or experience qualifying the investigators for the performance of these procedures should be indicated. Complete curriculum vitae are not required.

J. Primary Investigator’s Contact Information
Full name, mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address as well as a list of additional members of the research team.

IV. Human Subject Protection / IRB Certification
Applicants are required to provide evidence that (1) the proposed study has been reviewed and approved for human subject protection purposes by another institution such as a university Institutional Review Board (IRB) or that (2) all members of the research team have satisfactorily completed the National Institute of Health Tutorial on human subject protection. Information on the free tutorial is available at: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php

V. Affidavit of Non-Release
All applicants must complete and sign the District’s Affidavit of Non-Release form.

Revised: 06/2017
Affidavit of Non-Release by Researchers

I, _____________________, do solemnly affirm that when given access to a) data provided by the Office of Research, Evaluation & Assessment, and/or b) survey information from Fresno Unified School District employees or students, I shall not:

1. Use or reveal any personally identifiable information furnished, acquired, retrieved, or assembled by me or others, under the provisions of California Education Code, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for any purpose other than statistical purposes specified in the Letter of Agreement

2. Distribute a survey requesting personal student information without prior written consent by the student’s parent/guardian, as defined in California School Board Policy/AR 5022

3. Make any release or publication whereby an individual could be identified or the data furnished by or related to any particular person can be identified; or

4. Permit anyone other than the individual authorized by this study to examine the individual reports.

My signature below also acknowledges that no study or findings will be published or released which identify by name, the district or any of its schools or individuals without the required approval of the district Superintendent or designee in writing.

Signature: _____________________________________________________________

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Title: _________________________________________________________________

Organization: __________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________