

# External Research Request Process

## A Guide for Researchers

Updated

System Improvement and Research Section (SIRS)  
Department of Children and Family Services  
County of Los Angeles

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This presentation summarizes the DCFS System Improvement and Research Section's policies, processes, and procedures for external research requests.

# DCFS System Improvement and Research Section Mission

- Expand the capabilities of DCFS to plan and conduct original research projects and program evaluations.
- Support a continuing infusion of evidence-based practices into DCFS.
- Manage the DCFS external and internal research request processes.

# DCFS External Research Request Process

To initiate the DCFS External Research Request Process, the researcher(s) must file the following documents:

1. External Research Request Form
2. General Agreement Form
3. Reporting Agreement Form
4. Cover Letter
5. The Research Proposal
6. IRB Application (if applicable)
7. IRB Approval Letter (if applicable)
8. Court Approval Application (if applicable)
9. Court Approval Letter (if applicable)
10. Letter of Support or References

# DCFS External Research Request Process

- On the General Agreement Form and Reporting Agreement Form, the researcher should initial next to each condition listed.
- It is recommended that the researcher initiate or complete the IRB approval process prior to initiating this request process.
- It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain the letter of support and reference from DCFS managers.

# Research Proposal

The Research Proposal should include the following components:

1. Research purpose and research hypotheses
2. Literature review summary
3. Expected end products
4. Research plan and methodologies
5. Subject population
6. Sampling methods and sample sizes
7. Confidentiality of the study participants
8. Potential benefit to DCFS and study population
9. Potential risks to DCFS and study population
10. Tests to be administered (if applicable)
11. Questionnaires or interview schedules (if applicable)
12. Sample of the informed consent form (if applicable)
13. Schedule of major milestones
14. Curriculum vitae of principal investigators

# Court Approval

- Approval of the Juvenile Court is required for all research requests involving:
  - Review of closed or open case files
  - Individual CWS/CMS case records
  - Interviews of children or families
  - Observations or testing of children
  - Other sensitive information
- Court approval for these types of requests is required for DCFS employees conducting research for their education (e.g., thesis or dissertation).
- Forms for the court petition are available from the Juvenile Court (see the end of this presentation for contact information).
- The Juvenile Court will respond directly to the petitioner, and copy SIRS.

Regardless of past or present relationships with DCFS and other County of Los Angeles departments and entities, all prospective researchers are expected to follow the policies and processes outlined in this guide.

# Work Products

- The researcher agrees to send SIRS copies of the final work products including reports and publications for the DCFS files.
- We request the final work product be mailed to SIRS within 180 days of project completion.
- Pursuant to the standard court order, when court approval for the research is required, the researcher must also send a copy of the final product to the Juvenile Court.
- The researcher agrees to conduct a briefing on the research findings if requested by DCFS.

# Scope Changes

- Project approval is given only for the scope of work defined in the research plan and the IRB application.
- Proposed changes to the project scope (such as methods, samples, evaluation instruments, and time schedule) must be reviewed and approved by DCFS and the IRB.
- For research involving a court order, the researcher must notify the Juvenile Court once the proposed changes are reviewed and accepted.
- The Juvenile Court will determine if the researcher needs to submit a new or updated court petition.

# Court Contact Information

Lilia Alvarez Romo, Research Attorney  
Edelman Children's Court  
201 Centre Plaza Drive, Suite 3  
Monterey Park, California 91754

Fax: 323-526-6566

E-mail: [LARomo@LACourt.org](mailto:LARomo@LACourt.org)

# DCFS Contact Information

System Improvement and Research Section  
Process Management Office Division  
Bureau of Operational Support Services  
Department of Children and Family Services  
County of Los Angeles

E-mail: [research@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:research@dcfs.lacounty.gov)

Research and Evaluation website:  
<http://www.lacdcfs.org/rae/index.html>