

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

PRIVACY NOTICE

Medical Examination Records for Service in Polar Regions

The National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs is responsible for ensuring that all personnel traveling to the polar regions under the auspices of the United States meet certain medical standards. This medical screening process requires that certain medical records be generated on each individual participating in the program.

The information requested on NSF provided forms is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1870 et seq. It will be used by NSF and its contractors and subcontractors in the medical screening process to determine whether an applicant is qualified for deployment to the polar regions. An individual medical file will include information collected to determine whether one is qualified for assignment to the polar regions, as well as clinical files that may be generated if one receives medical treatment in any of the US sponsored medical clinics in Antarctica or in the Arctic, as well as any off-ice treatment facilities arranged by the NSF or its contractor or subcontractor.

The records are used for three primary purposes: (1) to determine the individual's fitness for assignment in the polar regions, including individual waiver requests; (2) to assist in determining an appropriate course of medical/dental treatment should the individual seek medical care with any medical care provider while deployed; and (3) to provide documentation for addressing quality of care issues associated with these medical functions.

Records contained within this system may be released to individuals involved in those three functions. Such individuals include, in addition to designated NSF employees as needed for assigned duties: (a) designated medical care practitioners and their administrative support personnel including designated contractors and subcontractors involved in determining an individual's fitness for Antarctic or Arctic assignment, including individual waiver requests; (b) medical care providers during deployment including those in NSF-supported stations and field camps in the polar regions where the individual is assigned; and (c) medical experts advising the NSF on quality of medical care issues associated with NSF's polar research programs. In addition to these purposes, information in the medical records may be released to the individual's personal or examining physician or the individual's designated emergency point of contact when disclosure is necessary to determine initial medical clearance or to review treatment options if the individual requires medical attention while on assignment in the polar regions. The determination of whether the individual is physically qualified/not physically qualified (PQ/NPQ) may be released to representatives of the individual's sponsoring organization including academic institutions, and investigators on a grant to inform them whether an individual is approved for deployment or not.

If necessary, information may be released to Federal, state, or local agencies, or foreign governments when disclosure is necessary to obtain records in connection with an investigation by or for the NSF; and to another Federal agency, a court, or a party in litigation before a court or in an administrative proceeding if the government is a party, or when NSF determines that the litigation or anticipated litigation or proceeding is likely to affect the Agency.

Submission of the information requested is voluntary. However, if you fail to provide any of the requested information, NSF or its contractor may be unable to process or to approve your application for polar deployment.

More detail about how and where these records are maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, is contained in the National Science Foundation's System of Records Notice, Medical Examination Records for Service in the Polar Regions, available upon request from the NSF¹. No disclosure of information contained in your medical file will be made except as described by the NSF's System Notice or as otherwise authorized by law. You may request a copy of your records for review.

¹ For a copy of the System Notice, please contact the OPP Safety and Health Officer at NSF at (703) 306-1032, or write to Safety and Health Officer, Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 755, Arlington, VA 22230.