

## **NORC'S Commitment to Confidentiality**

### **Statement of Professional Ethics**

- Pledge of Compliance by Staff, Interviewers, Contractors and Visiting Researchers

**Note:** A short form of this pledge is available for temporary visitors to secure areas.

NORC's mission as a social science research center is to collect data on the attitudes and behavior of people and organizations, and to analyze and report on these data.

NORC undertakes significant scientific research - the results of which are made widely available in scholarly books and articles, university classrooms, to funding agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) and the media. As a not-for-profit research center, affiliated with the University of Chicago, NORC performs its mission according to these values:

- We value the integrity, professional standards, job satisfaction, and safety of our interviewers and staff.
- We value each respondent's right to privacy, to decide voluntarily whether to participate in our research, and to be informed about the purposes, scope, and importance of that involvement.
- We value the researcher's right to gather a complete and accurate picture of social realities through data collection from a systematically selected sample of respondents, with appropriate intensive follow-up of non-participants to insure valid findings, using the services of our carefully trained interviewing staff.
- We value our public's confidence in our management of human and financial resources so as to produce high quality work, on schedule, at an appropriate cost.

These values imply obligations. It is NORC's intent and policy to (a) protect the rights, privacy and confidence of its respondents; (b) to maintain the confidentiality of its documents; and (c) to safeguard all internal methods, processes, and procedures not generally known in the field of data collection and analysis. Any breach of the Agreement (Statement of NORC Professional Ethics) may result in severance of the relationship with NORC and/or the pursuit of legal action. The professional activities of each NORC staff member, interviewer, and visitor to secure areas of research activity are directed and regulated by the following policies:

- The only permissible role for people directly involved with NORC data collection is that of professional researcher. Therefore, the total confidentiality of individuals and organizations from which information is collected must always be assured. Information learned about individuals or establishments in the course of research, either in locating attempts, interviewing, data abstraction from secondary sources, or incidentally, must be restricted to project personnel and appropriate others, and used strictly for research purposes.

More specifically, a condition of employment and/or affiliation, for all employees, researchers and contractors requires that:

- **Interviewers** must interview respondents in situations which do not compromise respondents' privacy, and store survey documents where access by unauthorized people is prevented. They never interview people they know personally, except with prior research project approval. Interviewers must not discuss the respondents, their families or the organizations respondents may represent, with non-project staff or with project staff for non-project-related reasons. An exception may occur in attempts to locate respondents when strictly limited information (such as respondent name and the general purpose of the contact) may sometimes be disclosed.
- **Interviewers** may do nothing that would bias respondent answers. This includes making statements that would lead respondents to change their answer, implying criticism or support for respondent's attitudes or behavior, or inventing or distorting respondent answers. They may not lie to respondents or use practices or methods which abuse, coerce, or humiliate them. They must deal humanely with respondents' requests for help and assistance, but follow project guidelines about referrals to appropriate resources. They must not offer personal assistance or direct aid.
- **Project office staff** must treat all information linked to identifiable respondents as privileged information, unless respondents or their organization waives confidentiality for specified uses. This restriction applies to all communications from and about respondents, their relatives, and their organizations. Completed research documents that identify respondents or organizations are kept only in areas with limited access. When such documents are being handled and used, they are never left unattended and are locked away when not in immediate use. Access to survey data must be limited to appropriate personnel who have signed this statement.
- **Corporate Documents** such as data tapes, printouts, photocopies and any other documents with respondent names or other identifying information must be stored, used in a manner for which they were intended, and disposed of in a secure manner both in the field and in the central office. This restriction and commitment to confidentiality also applies to completed questionnaires, proposals, MIS and staff labor reports, the use, disclosure or reference to individual salary information, and any other memos or documents generally considered to be "confidential" or specifically labeled as such.
- **Contractors** who process information with respondent identifiers, such as for data entry, must abide by these same restrictions and secure signatures to the accompanying pledge and compliance with this statement.
- **Sponsoring agencies** are never provided with respondent names or other identifying data unless specifically authorized by respondents or incorporated in the contract. Data and other results of the research are presented only in summarized form without any names or other identifying information. Every effort will also be made to prevent deductive discovery. Where appropriate, specific waivers are obtained to protect confidentiality of respondents under existing legal regulations. In studies where a respondent's identity and activities may be of interest to law enforcement agencies and waivers from subpoena cannot be obtained, further measures may be taken to remove data from the jurisdiction of U.S. authorities.
- **No one given approved access** to privileged information may use this information for personal gain or for any non-research purpose.
- **Privileged information** includes confidential information concerning NORC business and personnel as well as information about individual respondents. Personnel information may not be used for any purpose not directly job-related.

# Statement of NORC Professional Ethics

## Agreement

(Each NORC employee and each visitor to secure areas of NORC project activities must read the accompanying statement and sign this agreement as a condition of employment or access. For office employees, see "Employee Misconduct Policy" of the NORC Personnel Policies Manual for penalties for violating this pledge.)

I have carefully read the accompanying NORC Statement of Professional Ethics and fully understand that its obligations apply to me and are a condition of employment at NORC and/or access to research documents.

I will abide by NORC's standards of professional ethics as described in this statement. In addition to the possibility of legal action being pursued, I am also aware that failure to abide by the standards will result in disciplinary actions, including possible termination if I am an employee, or denial of further access and cooperation if I am a visitor, contractor, or researcher.

I understand that the accompanying statement and this agreement, relative to the confidentiality of NORC's respondents, its corporate documents and its internal processes/procedures, are applicable both during and after employment.

**PRINT NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYEE ID NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep the accompanying statements for your records and return this pledge to:

**NORC**  
Human Resources Department  
55 East Monroe Street  
Chicago, IL 60603  
E-mail: [HRHELP@norc.org](mailto:HRHELP@norc.org)  
Fax: (312) 325-2534