

# **APPENDIX G. WESTAT DATA COLLECTOR CODE OF CONDUCT AND ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

## **WESTAT DATA COLLECTOR CODE OF CONDUCT AND ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Westat is committed to the collection of high quality, independent, and unbiased data. These Performance Standards and Assurance of Confidentiality define the principles that are at the foundation of our data collection. By following these principles, we assure clients, researchers, educators, business leaders, and policymakers that they can have confidence in the data we collect.

The basic principles guiding Westat data collection are:

### **I. Ethics**

- Data collectors have an obligation to the public, respondents, clients, and Westat to collect data according to study procedures.
- Respondents, who are individuals or institutions that participate in our studies, are to be provided with the information about the basic elements of a study as set forth in survey materials.
- Respondents are to be treated with respect and their concerns are to be addressed promptly, openly, and courteously.
- Data collectors are to maintain high standards of personal conduct and perform their job in a manner that will not harm, humiliate, or mislead respondents.
- Data collectors have an obligation to submit time and expense information that accurately reflects the work performed.

### **II. Technical Performance**

- Data collectors are to follow the study protocol and procedures as specified in the study manual, at training, and in post training memos.
- Data collectors are to complete data collection and administrative activities accurately and on schedule.
- Data collectors are to return **all** study materials and equipment (in good condition) to Westat at the end of the study.
- Data collectors are to submit work that is valid and conforms to the quality requirements for the study.

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### **III. Work Style**

- Data collectors are to perform their work as effectively as possible and in such a way as to meet the goals set for the study.
- Data collectors are to accept responsibility for the quality of the data they collect and the work they complete.
- Data collectors are to demonstrate commitment, initiative, consistency, and organization in their approach to work.
- Data collectors are to display a professional attitude and appearance during the conduct of their work.
- Data collectors are to communicate professionally and effectively with clients, respondents, and other employees.
- Data collectors are to work effectively with the project team.

### **IV. Confidentiality**

#### **A. Policy on Confidentiality of Survey Data**

Westat is firmly committed to the principle that the privacy of respondents and the confidentiality of individual data obtained through Westat surveys must be protected. This principle holds whether or not any specific guarantee of confidentiality was given at time of data collection, or whether or not there are specific contractual obligations to the client. When guarantees have been given or contractual obligations regarding confidentiality have been entered into, they may impose additional requirements, which are to be adhered to strictly.

#### **B. Protecting the Privacy and Rights of Survey Participants**

Successful survey research depends upon the cooperation of respondents. Data collectors are expected to gain cooperation using the methods described at training sessions or by their supervisor. For example, data collectors should explain the survey carefully and accommodate respondent time preferences wherever practical.

Data collectors are also to respect the privacy and property of respondents. They must not engage in any selling or promotion of products or services or in any other activity unrelated to the survey. If the data collector or the respondent suffers damage or injury to person or property in the course of the data collector's activities, Westat must be notified promptly.

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**C. Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality**

All Westat employees and data collectors shall sign this agreement of confidentiality. This agreement may be superseded by another agreement for a particular project.

Data collectors shall keep completely confidential the names and addresses of respondents, all information or opinions collected in the course of interviews, and any information learned incidentally about individual respondents, responding organizations, or the places and organization where respondents work and live. Data collectors shall exercise care to prevent access by others to survey data in their possession.

Unless specifically instructed otherwise for a particular project, an employee or data collector, upon encountering a respondent or information pertaining to a respondent that s/he knows personally, shall immediately terminate the activity and contact her/his supervisor for instructions.

**As a data collector on *[project name]*, I agree to follow the principles and guidelines listed above. I understand that my performance will be evaluated using these criteria, as well as project-specific requirements detailed in the study manual, at training, in post training memos or as otherwise directed by my supervisor or Westat generally.**

**I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by all policies on privacy and confidentiality. I will keep completely confidential all information arising from surveys concerning individual respondents to which I gain access. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to survey data and identifiers except as authorized by Westat for a particular contract. I will devote my best efforts to ensure that there is compliance with the required procedures by personnel whom I supervise.**

**I understand that violation of this pledge will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. I also understand that violation of the privacy rights of individuals through unauthorized discussion, disclosure, dissemination, or access may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. A copy of this document has been provided to me.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_