Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
SOPS® Hospital Database
Information and Instructions for Requesting SOPS Hospital-identifiable Data

This document is for researchers interested in requesting hospital-identifiable data from the AHRQ Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture® (SOPS®) Database.

Introduction

The SOPS Hospital Database is a central repository for SOPS Hospital Survey data. The SOPS Hospital Database is funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and managed and administered by its contractor, Westat.

The SOPS Hospital Database is populated with SOPS Hospital Survey data through the voluntary participation of U.S. hospitals that have administered the survey and are willing to submit their data for inclusion in the Database. Because hospitals voluntarily submit data to the Database, the data do not constitute a nationally representative sample.

AHRQ, and its contractor, Westat, may grant researchers access to SOPS hospital-identifiable data from the Database, for research purposes. Hospital-identifiable data files contain hospital identifiers, such as hospital name, address, and Medicare Provider ID, which may be used to link the data to other measures for research purposes. Researchers using SOPS hospital-identifiable patient safety culture survey data may not release, disclose or make public any identifying information about specific hospitals at any time.

Hospital-identifiable data files do not identify individual respondents within hospitals. SOPS hospital-identifiable patient safety culture survey data are only provided to researchers after hospitals that have submitted to the Database provide written authorization to release their hospital-identifiable data.

Process for Requesting Hospital-identifiable Data

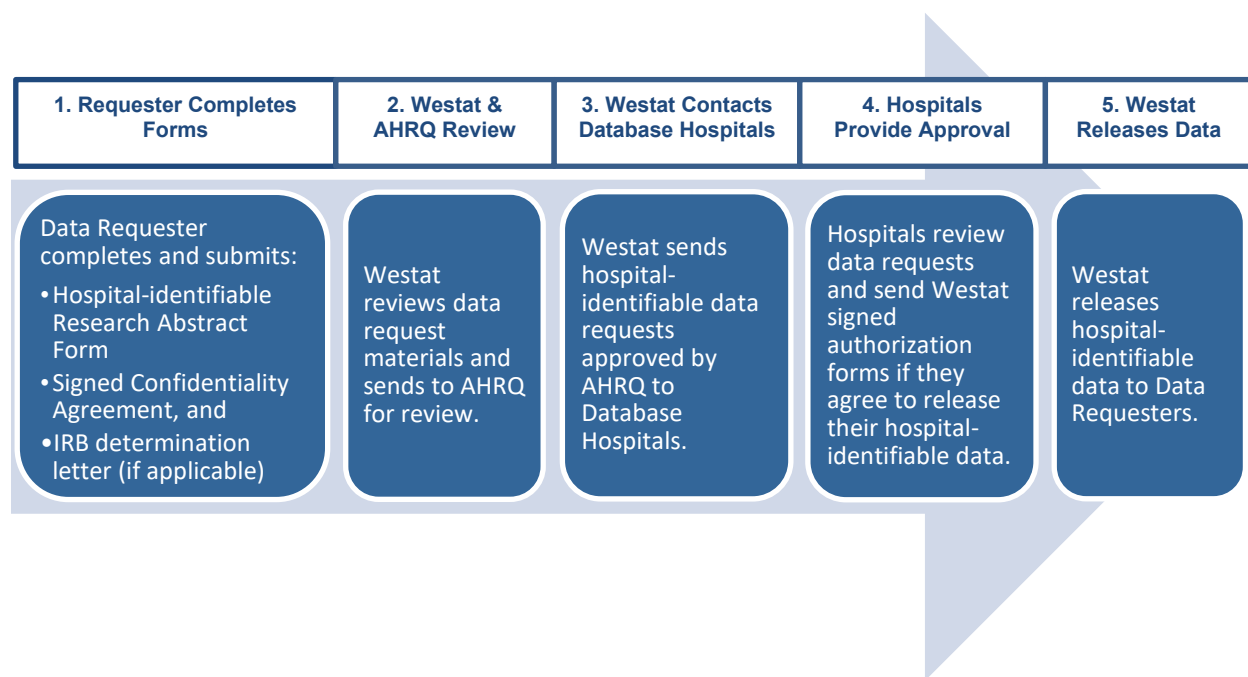Researchers interested in obtaining data must submit:

1. A completed Hospital-identifiable Research Abstract Form;
2. A signed Confidentiality Agreement; and
3. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) determination letter for the proposed research, if Data Requester's organization has an IRB.

The Hospital-identifiable Research Abstract Form and Confidentiality Agreement are available on the AHRQ website (https://www.ahrq.gov/sops/databases/research-datasets.html).

All completed Research Abstract Forms are reviewed by Westat to ensure completeness and clarity, and to verify that the hospital-identifiable data are being requested for appropriate purposes. Requests are then submitted to AHRQ for review and approval. All approved data requests are submitted to those Database hospitals that have not provided written pre-approval for the release of their SOPS hospital-identifiable data. Database hospitals review the data requests and decide whether or not to authorize release of their SOPS hospital-identifiable data to each Data Requester on a case-by-case basis.

The process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Flowchart of Process for Releasing Hospital-Identifiable Patient Safety Culture Data

1. Requester Completes Forms	2. Westat & AHRQ Review	3. Westat Contacts Database Hospitals	4. Hospitals Provide Approval	5. Westat Releases Data
Data Requester completes and submits: • Hospital-identifiable Research Abstract Form • Signed Confidentiality Agreement, and • IRB determination letter (if applicable)	Westat reviews data request materials and sends to AHRQ for review.	Westat sends hospital-identifiable data requests approved by AHRQ to Database Hospitals.	Hospitals review data requests and send Westat signed authorization forms if they agree to release their hospital-identifiable data.	Westat releases hospital-identifiable data to Data Requesters.

AHRQ reviews hospital-identifiable data requests year-round, but only sends approved requests to Database hospitals once a year. Typically, hospitals are given 12 weeks to provide written authorization for the release of their data. Once written authorization is received, it typically takes another 6 weeks to release the hospital-identifiable data to Data Requesters.

Conditions for Denying a Request for Hospital-identifiable Data

Requests for access to hospital-identifiable data files may be denied under any of the following conditions:

1. If the central purpose of the study is not for research. Valid purposes for using hospital-identifiable data do NOT include the use of data for public reporting, proprietary, commercial, or competitive purposes, or to determine the rights, benefits, or privileges of organizations participating in the Database. An example of commercial or competitive purposes includes, but is not limited to, combining the requested Database data with other data sources to report together for commercial or public reporting purposes.

2. If the research objectives are not feasible using the requested data.

3. If the data processing required to produce the requested data files places an unusually heavy burden on Database staff.

4. If fewer than 20 hospitals provide express written authorization to release identifiable data for a specific data request. (There is no guarantee regarding the number of Database hospitals that will authorize release of their data.)

If there are concerns about a submitted Research Abstract Form raised during the review process, the comments of the reviewers will be sent to the Requester. Data Requesters may make modifications and re-submit the Research Abstract Form for review.

Publication Requirements

Individuals receiving hospital-identifiable patient safety culture survey data are required to include the following acknowledgment in any report, publication, or presentation using hospital-identifiable SOPS Hospital Database data:

> "The Surveys on Patient Safety Culture® (SOPS®) Hospital Survey data used in this analysis were provided by the Hospital SOPS Database. The Hospital SOPS Database is funded by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and administered by Westat under Contract No. GS-00F-009DA/75Q80123F80005."

Copies of all publications and presentations using hospital-identifiable SOPS Database data must be sent to Westat.

Disclaimer

Approval of data requests does not constitute endorsement by AHRQ or Westat of the proposed research project, study findings, or recommendations of the research team.

Applying for Hospital-identifiable SOPS Data and Contact Information

Researchers interested in obtaining hospital-identifiable SOPS data from the Hospital SOPS Database must submit a completed Hospital-identifiable Research Abstract Form and Confidentiality Agreement. These forms are available on the AHRQ website (https://www.ahrq.gov/sops/databases/research-datasets.html). Completed forms should be emailed to SOPSResearchData@westat.com (Subject line: SOPS Hospital-identifiable Data Request).

Surveys on Patient Safety Culture Research Databases
Westat
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