

Survey Research Center

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Robert J. Willis
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Dear HRS Restricted Data User:

We are writing to inform you of a likely change in the agreement that you currently have to access restricted data from the Health and Retirement Study.

As you know, the agreement for use of HRS restricted data includes strict conditions on who is eligible to use the data, under what conditions, and what security protocols must be used to protect the security of the data. The current HRS requirement that you supply HRS with periodic proof of federal funding and IRB approval provide the mechanism needed to enforce any potential violations of the agreement.

The fact that HRS has not yet outlined particular techniques to review and monitor on-site compliance of restricted data users with their restricted data agreements has become a topic of discussion of our sponsors and data providers at NIA and SSA. We therefore must inform you that the HRS now intends to adopt an audit procedure for all users of restricted data in connection with the HRS survey.

Details remain to be worked out, but the audit will likely involve an unannounced visit to the work site by an independent investigator, who will seek to verify compliance with the restricted user's data protection plan. Violations will be the subject of further investigation and may result in withdrawal of data access, among other possible penalties.

We understand that changes in personnel, office configurations, or computer equipment may occasionally result in modifications to the way you use the HRS restricted data. If you have made any such changes since submitting your last restricted data agreement, now would be a very good time to submit an amendment to your restricted data use agreement so that we can approve it and incorporate it into your file before implementing the audit process. In any event we urge strict adherence to the restricted data protocol, and remind your that it is your responsibility to review updates in the restricted data material on the HRS website (<http://hrs.isr.umich.edu:1041/>) on a periodic basis to determine whether any changes have been implemented that might require a change in your restricted data protection procedures.

Thank you for your cooperation, and do not hesitate to contact Cathy Liebowitz (email: catlieb@umich.edu; voice: 734.763.4180; fax: 734.647.1186) with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Willis, Director
Health and Retirement Study