



October 1, 2014

RE: Processes for generation of APPD LEARN data collection identifiers.

Sites participating in APPD LEARN studies collect data from and about their learners and transmit these data to APPD LEARN for the purposes of data archiving, aggregation, and sharing. These data are transmitted to APPD LEARN tagged with APPD LEARN data collection ids, which are unique to each learner and are fixed over time and across studies. This letter details the process by which sites generate APPD LEARN data collection ids for their learners and their subsequent handling by APPD LEARN to protect the privacy of learners.

1. Generation of APPD LEARN data collection ids

Of critical importance to APPD LEARN is the maintenance of confidentiality for learners whose programs participate in APPD LEARN studies. APPD LEARN has developed a de-identification system that generates unique and permanent learner codes for use in reporting de-identified data to APPD LEARN. This automated online system allows program directors to upload the birthdates and last four-digits of social security numbers (or other government issued identification numbers, for international students). Through a non-reversible cryptographic process, the system then generates a data collection ID unique to each learner.

Upload and download in the online system is protected by standard world-wide web encryption protocols (TLS). The online system is located at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is physically secure and under the exclusive control of the APPD LEARN Director, as well as implementing standard practices for data security appropriate for a Linux server. Uploaded data is not logged or retained by the online system and immediately triggers a download of a data file based on the uploaded file but with APPD LEARN data collection ids included for each learner. The web address for the system is: <https://learn.cybermango.org/cgi-bin/xls-code.cgi>

2. Data transmission

All learner data sent from programs to APPD LEARN is identified only by the data collection ID, ensuring that APPD LEARN can never associate data with learners. Because the data collection IDs are non-reversible, APPD LEARN can not re-identify learners. At no point in time, is APPD LEARN in possession of identifiable data from study participants.

ASSOCIATION OF PEDIATRIC PROGRAM DIRECTORS – LEARN

6728 Old McLean Village Dr., McLean, VA 22101-3906 * Phone: (703) 556-9222 *

Fax: (703) 556-8729 * Email: learn@appd.org * <http://learn.appd.org>



3. Data sharing

Before APPD LEARN archives or shares data, the APPD LEARN data collection ids are recoded by APPD LEARN using a second layer of encryption that prevents anyone receiving the data—even the program that originally collected it—from reidentifying learners, and makes the data suitable for public sharing. Shared data is identified only by this reencrypted id.

Additional questions about APPD LEARN's data collection or data sharing ids may be directed to:

Alan Schwartz, PhD, APPD LEARN Director
Robin Young, MS, APPD LEARN Project Manager
Email: learn@appd.org

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Schwartz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alan Schwartz, PhD, Director
Association of Pediatric Program Directors Longitudinal Educational Assessment Research Network (APPD LEARN)