



Ontario Physician Reporting Centre

Data Access and Release Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this Data Access and Release Policy is to set out standard data access criteria within the Ontario Physician Reporting Centre (OPRC) and to streamline the processing and release of data requested.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with OPRC's Steering Committee. The OPRC Steering Committee is comprised of the Ontario Ministry of Health, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine and the Ontario Medical Association, who all jointly govern OPRC. As OPRC is wholly owned and operated out of McMaster University, this policy has also been reviewed by the McMaster Privacy Office to ensure alignment with Ontario's Digital and Data Directive.

Background

The protection of sensitive data is of the utmost importance to OPRC. OPRC is a custodian of data that it collects internally as well as data it receives from its data partners. (e.g., College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, Ministry of Health, the Ontario medical schools, Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, etc.) Data that OPRC receives from external data partners are bound by the terms of their respective Data Sharing Agreements. OPRC is also bound under [McMaster University's Privacy Office](#) by the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FIPPA\)](#).

OPRC is committed to protecting the privacy of all personal information holdings. To prevent unauthorized access and to ensure the correct use of information, OPRC has implemented stringent operating procedures to secure the information that it holds and has detailed this in its Data Management Policies and Procedures.

There are two main types of data requests:

1. Record-level data: OPRC does not publish or provide identifiable record-level data to any third parties without a data sharing agreement (DSA) with the organization that has provided this data to OPRC unless its provision is required under the terms of legislation or a court order.
2. Aggregate data: Any published information or reporting is in aggregate form for statistical purposes only. Aggregate reports are prepared for interested parties on request but never include physician identifiers. OPRC does not use any personal information collected for commercial purposes.

A fundamental value within OPRC's culture is to balance protection of data access while ensuring appropriate and timely access to data by those who require it for their work. This policy will help streamline assessment of data requests and guide OPRC in assessing whether the request(s) can be fulfilled as well as prioritizing the request(s) with respect to ongoing operations.

Data Request Process

- 1. Submitting a data request:** Requests for data access should be made in writing to OPRC using OPRC's [data request form](#). The request form includes the purpose of the request and plans for usage and dissemination.
- 2. Evaluation of the request:** Requests for data will be evaluated based on the level of sensitivity of the data being requested. Aggregate data requests generally have a lower sensitivity. De-identified record-level data requests are highly sensitive and will require consultation with the party(ies) that provided the underlying data to determine if the request fits within the terms of OPRC's Data Sharing Agreements.
- 3. Evaluation of Data Sharing Agreements:** OPRC is bound by the terms of its Data Sharing Agreements with data partners. Depending on the type of data requested, OPRC may require approval from the data partner(s) and/or its Steering Committee before proceeding with the data request.
- 4. Prioritization:** In submitting the data request, the requestor acknowledges that OPRC reserves the right to evaluate the data request alongside its ongoing commitments and production priorities. Requests will be prioritized based the level of sensitivity of the data and the availability of OPRC resources.
- 5. Eligible requestors:** These include Canadian health care organizations, media (data requests only), governments, not-for-profit health agencies, universities, health professionals and researchers from the public sector. OPRC is unable to fulfill data requests from private/ commercial organizations. OPRC reserves the right to review the request with our Steering Committee for eligibility as needed.
- 6. Data preparation costs:** OPRC responds to data requests on a *cost-recovery basis*. The costs are \$75 per hour. The *first 3 hours of work per request are free*. For media, 10 free hours of staff time per topic per 12-month period. Requests by the Ontario Ministry of Health are at no cost as they fund OPRC. Requests to make published data accessible/AODA compliant are at no cost.
- 7. Targeted response time:** The OPRC team aims to acknowledge requests within 5 business days. The delivery time of the data will depend on the complexity of the request and ongoing OPRC operations. Estimated times and any extensions will be communicated with the requestor.
- 8. Data delivery:** Once a data request has been approved, the data will be delivered to the requester in the agreed-upon format and within the agreed-upon timeframe. The requester will be responsible for ensuring that the data is used appropriately and in accordance with OPRC's policies and any applicable laws and regulations.



Security Measures

OPRC has a formal protocol for the sharing of information with third-party organizations to ensure data security. The sole use of the identifiable physician data that OPRC receives from its Data Providers relates to aggregation of that data into OPRC's reports. OPRC does not disclose identifiable physician information to third parties. Data are shared only on a "need to know" basis, so OPRC needs to confirm the recipient has the appropriate requirement for the data for their official duties before fulfilling data requests.

Security, transfers, handling, retention and disposal of data are further subject to OPRC's Data Management Policies and Procedures and Small Cell Size Reporting policy.

Effective Date

Policy was reviewed and approved by the OPRC Steering Committee effective November 7, 2023. OPRC reserves the right to modify or supplement this Policy upon reasonable published notice concerning the change and the reason for it.