Epidemiology and Scientific Support Bureau (ESSB)Annual Data Access Process

Scope

This process is for epidemiologists and analysts who work in the Public Health and Safety Division (PHSD), Early Childhood and Family Services Division (ECFSD), the Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division (BHDD), and local and tribal public health departments in Montana. Access to these data is intended for use in public health practice in Montana by providing evidence to support: applications for funding, program planning, and program evaluation. Access to the following data sets can be requested:

- ESSENCE (syndromic surveillance)
- BRFSS
- Hospital Discharge Data (inpatient and emergency department)
- Birth
- Death
- Fetal Death
- Abortion

The data sets may include Protected Health Information (PHI), or personal identifying information of the person or institution named in the surveillance data. It is the policy of ESSB that the release of surveillance data must balance the public's right to know with an individual's right to privacy as stated in the Constitution of the State of Montana, Article II, Sections 9 and 10. It is the policy of ESSB that data will be released in as non-specific form as possible to accommodate the legitimate needs of the analyst requesting data, while safeguarding the confidentiality of the person or institution named in a data. Therefore, requesters must provide adequate justification that data which may directly or indirectly identify a person or institution is needed and that such data will be protected by assurances of data confidentiality and security.

Process

1) Determine the data you need access to and write out justifications for that level of access. Send these justifications to your supervisor to start the request process.
2) Your supervisor must complete the access request using the Internal Access Request Form for State employees, and the External Access Request Form for local and tribal public health employees. Those who work for the State of Montana may use the "State login" and use their regular network username and password. External users must use the "Citizen login" and create an account here if they do not already have one. You may request access to multiple datasets with one form so select all the desired datasets at once.
3) Once your request is submitted, you will get an email verifying your request. **Be sure to save this email until after you have signed all needed confidentiality agreements.**
4) The data stewards of the requested datasets will review your request. They may reach out to you directly if they have any questions about your request or justifications.

*ESSENCE users will not be given file access via file transfer or network folder as ESSENCE is hosted on the internet. They will instead be given a login via email.

5) Once the data stewards and any other data owners have approved the request, you will receive an email with each of the applicable confidentiality agreements for the datasets you have requested. You will be able to sign these confidentiality agreements and submit them through ServiceNow. **Be sure the REQ# from your confirmation email is correct on the confidentiality agreements**.

6) ESSB data stewards will ensure your signed agreement(s) is correctly liked to your request to complete the approval of the request.

7) For internal users requesting new access to datasets, ServiceNow will automatically generate a network access request to give you access to the appropriate network folders where the data are stored. Network Security will grant access to the needed folders using the same process as any access request*.

8) External users will receive a copy of the most recent dataset through the [State of Montana File Transfer Site](). The same account can be used to login to the transfer site as was used to login to the access request form*.

9) ESSENCE Users will receive a separate email from the BioSense AMC with login information to BioSense, which can then be used to access ESSENCE.

10) New users will also receive a welcome email with helpful resources specific to the datasets they requested.

Annual Renewal

All data users must renew their access to the dataset on an annual basis. ESSB will review a list of all internal users with access to each dataset once a year and notify users that it is time to renew their access. If a user fails to renew their access within 30 days of receiving this notice, their access will be terminated.

External data users must submit a request each year in order to receive an updated dataset with the newest data available.

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