

Why We Need a Data Sharing Agreement



Data is a foundational component to understanding how to improve educational outcomes, classroom instructional practices and implementation of policies, programs and interventions.

A data sharing agreement is a formal, legally binding document that outlines the terms, conditions, and safeguards under which data is shared between organizations to ensure privacy, security, and appropriate use. A DSA typically includes:

- ➔ Details of the data/information to be discussed
- ➔ Protections/security procedures for disclosed data
- ➔ IRB review/approval
- ➔ Description of the purpose, scope, duration of the study being conducted (optional depending on LEA requirements)

Importance of a Data Sharing Agreement

Protects Student and Staff Privacy

- Establishes clear boundaries and safeguards around personally identifiable information (PII).

Ensures Legal Compliance

- Prevents unintentional violations of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or state data protection laws.
- Provides a record of due diligence and responsible data governance.

Clarifies Expectations

- Prevents misunderstandings or scope creep.
- Helps involved parties stay focused on agreed-upon goals.

Supports Transparency and Trust

- Demonstrates to interest holders (e.g., parents, school boards) that data is handled responsibly.
- Builds trust with the community and staff.

Improves Data Quality and Utility

- Standardizes the data shared to ensure it is useful for valid, reliable analysis.
- Facilitates better research and insights to inform decision-making.

Manages Risk

- Minimizes reputational and legal risk from misuse or misinterpretation of data.
- Offers recourse in case of data breaches or agreement violations.

Executing a DSA ensures LEAs as owners of data and researchers as users of data are in agreement about what data is to be used, how it will be used, by whom it will be used, and how data security will be maintained throughout the project.