

Conducting CCDF Error Rate Reviews Remotely

The purpose of this brief is to assist Lead Agencies that are interested in conducting the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) error rate reviews remotely. By “remotely,” we mean reviews that are conducted outside of Lead Agency central and local offices, particularly in reviewers’ home offices.

Basic Considerations

Reviewers will need access to 1) the child’s case record and 2) the Office of Child Care (OCC) approved Record Review Worksheet (RRW) template. If applicable, the reviewer may also need access to 3) the state eligibility, enrollment, and payment systems and 4) other external data verification systems.

Logistically, case records that are electronic may be the easiest for reviewers to access, through an online database or virtual private network (VPN). Paper records may pose challenges to conducting remote reviews. These records are likely housed in local offices unless copies have been sent to the central offices for the purposes of this review. Regardless of where records are physically located, it may be impossible for workers to access them if offices are closed due to unforeseen circumstances. If there is any access to paper records, consider scanning them into a shared drive for reviewers to access remotely. This may be preferable (from a security and logistical standpoint) to giving hard copies of case records to reviewers.

Specifics of the error rate review vary by state. Some of the content discussed here will not apply to each state. Reviewers should understand and follow Lead Agency policies and procedures.

Several states complete RRW using a printed paper version of the approved worksheet. These states may wish to consider creating an electronic version in Microsoft Word or Excel, which would make it easier to track and share completed worksheets. The electronic worksheet would need to be approved by OCC before reviews can begin. If using paper worksheets, reviewers must be able to scan them to a shared drive, so that project leadership and/or second-level reviewers can access them. If a reviewer does not have a scanner at home, they can use one of several phone or tablet applications that act as a scanner, such as Genius Scan.

Technology

Connection to state systems will vary depending on how those systems are set up. It may mean simply connecting via a web browser. If the systems are not accessible through a website, the reviewer will need to connect to the office’s network using a VPN. If records being reviewed are located on a shared network drive, then a VPN connection is required since the drive is located on the office network and not accessible without a secure connection. Reviewers should consult with their office’s IT support to setup a VPN, if necessary.

If external data verification systems (such as TANF or SNAP screens or child support or social security interfaces) are included in the review, reviewers will need access to those as well. This may involve a separate process from connecting to the child care office's network.

Maintaining Security

All electronic information should be stored securely according to state policy and with confidentiality in mind. Reviewers should only work on state-issued laptops, and not on personal computers/laptops or tablets.

Hard copy records, if used, must also be handled and stored securely. Project leadership must continually track their location and status. Keep a log of which reviewers are in possession of which records, and check in regularly. When not actively being reviewed, paper records should be stored in a secure location, such as inside a locked filing cabinet or locked room.

Project leadership must set protocols for how paper records will be handled after they are reviewed. These will depend on whether files are photocopies or originals, and whether someone else needs the files following the review (for example, for a second-level review). If records are photocopies that will no longer be needed, reviewers may be directed to shred and dispose of them. All movement of records, including disposal, should be included in the project leadership's tracking.

Record Review Worksheets should never contain any personally identifiable information (PII), including names, addresses, birthdates, employers, or provider license numbers.

To add another level of security, project leadership may wish to redact certain information from case files (either electronic or hard copy) before allowing remote access. Ensure that information relevant to the review remains available.

All reviewers should follow other basic steps to keep information secure when working remotely. For example, do not use a public or unsecured Wi-Fi network. Do not leave laptops or paper files in cars or other locations outside of the home office. Information should not be stored on USB drives. Files should be closed (if electronic) or stored (if paper) if not actively in use. Laptops should be locked when not in use. Do not leave any information in the open.

Other Considerations for Project Leadership

Project leadership should think about current processes for the following, and how they will translate to remote work:

- Tracking review status
- Communication protocols
- Sampling cases
- Determining if a replacement case will be used
- Assigning first- and second-level reviews

- Determining and maintaining inter-reviewer reliability (if group discussions are used as a method, how would these continue?)

Finally, the review team will need to be supported as they transition from in-house to remote work. Reviewers may not have a proper home office setup and equipment. For example, it may be challenging for a worker to conduct reviews at home using only a laptop when they normally have multiple monitors. While it may not be feasible for the agency to provide additional equipment, consider other ways that reviewers can be supported to stay organized and productive.

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