

**Pledge of Confidentiality and Compliance with Professional Research Ethics  
Survey Lab Staff, Students, and Visitors Involved in Collecting Data**

Version 2.0 – 7/2/2013

Note: A short form of this pledge is available for visitors to the Lab who will not be directly collecting data

**Statement of Professional Research Ethics**

The University of Chicago Survey Lab is a research center that collects data and trains students in data collection. We undertake scientific research, the results of which are released to clients and are likely to be published in scholarly books and articles. Results may also be used to inform public policy and help improve health care, government programs, education, and other public services.

As an academic nonprofit research center funded by project work, the Survey Lab works on limited budgets to produce high-quality results for clients who are respected in their fields. We rely on the collective adherence of our staff to core principles and obligations in order to maintain our professional livelihood and reputation.

**Principles** – Recognizing the importance of the work that we do, the Survey Lab strives to produce high-quality, unbiased results while fostering a friendly and supportive environment. We operate according to these principles:

- We value the input, the job satisfaction, the privacy, and the safety of our staff and students.
- We value each research subject’s right to privacy, to decide voluntarily whether to participate in our research, and to be informed about the purposes, scope, and importance of that involvement.
- We value the researcher’s right to gather a complete and accurate picture of social realities through systematic and scientific data collection.
- We value the efficient management of paid time and resources.

**Obligations** – Principles imply obligations. We recognize our responsibility to maintain our ethical principles and pledge to:

- Treat fellow employees and students with respect. Maintain the confidentiality of internal Survey Lab materials and issues, such as those related to personnel, methods, and training.
- Protect the rights, privacy, and trust of all research subjects (covered in more detail in the following Pledge of Confidentiality).
- Focus on quality. Strive to meet the standards described in Survey Lab training and research literature. Conduct all data entry, processing, and documentation efforts in a truthful and thorough manner.
- Limit the use of resources and avoid waste.

## Pledge of Confidentiality

We collect sensitive information from many different people and establishments. We ask research subjects (e.g. individual participants, participating establishments, prospective participants, participant proxies) to give us their time, and we seek to build a trusting professional relationship with them. We recognize our responsibility to maintain the privacy and trust of research subjects and pledge to:

- 1) **Protect research subjects' privacy before, during, and after data collection.**
  - a. We do not interview people we know personally, except with prior supervisor approval.
  - b. We conduct in-person interviews in locations that minimize the chance of others overhearing or observing. We offer alternatives when a participant's preferred location or home does not provide enough privacy.
  - c. We restrict access to our call center during data collection to those who have made this pledge. When calls need to be made or messages sent from outside of the call center, we do so in a place and manner that do not allow others to overhear or observe our communications.
- 2) **Treat all research subjects with respect.** Participants trust us to protect their identities and normally agree to take part in a study based on that trust. To build trust, it is essential that we demonstrate our respect for subjects and the research process in all interactions.
  - a. We treat all research subjects with honesty, patience and gratitude.
  - b. As required by IRB, we do our best to inform subjects about relevant study details and the risks and benefits of participation, and we always respect a subject's right to decline once they are informed.
  - c. Without offering personal assistance or direct aid that might bias response, we do our best to deal humanely with subjects' requests for help and assistance, following project guidelines about referrals to appropriate resources. We do everything possible within project guidelines to accommodate participant preferences in terms of location, time, language, and mode.
- 3) **Never share identifying information of research subjects with anyone outside the Survey Lab.** In some studies, the mere fact that we are trying to recruit someone can reveal sensitive or harmful information.
  - a. Identifying information varies from study to study, but may include first or last names, full or partial addresses, IP addresses, phone numbers, family member names, birth dates, race, age, gender, occupation, places of employment, or unique combinations of these in the study population.
  - b. We do not discuss identified research subjects for non-project-related reasons.
  - c. When approved by a supervisor, we may sometimes disclose limited information (such as participant name and the general purpose of the contact) in an attempt to locate a participant.
  - d. While we are often necessarily aware of both a participant's identity and his or her answers to study questions, we separate these two types of information for discussion, reporting, and long-term storage of collected data unless specified by individual project protocol and participant permission.
- 4) **Securely store study documents and electronic files.**
  - a. All research documents and files that identify participants or potential participants are stored in areas with limited access. When such documents are in use, they are not left unattended. When we are not present, data storage areas should be closed and locked.
  - b. When research documents or files are no longer needed, we destroy them.
- 5) **Notify or check with a supervisor about all cases in which an exception or breach of this pledge occurs.** It is everyone's responsibility to point out and help solve problems in data collection processes, particularly when participant confidentiality could be affected. We recognize that exceptions and mistakes occur, but a supervisor must be made aware of these in a timely manner.

**Agreement**

Please initial on the line next to each item. Then print your name, and sign and date below.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the above Statement of Professional Research Ethics and Pledge of Confidentiality.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree with the above Statement of Professional Research Ethics and Pledge of Confidentiality and their implied obligations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as described in the above Statement of Professional Research Ethics and Pledge of Confidentiality, and I agree that this pledge continues even after my association with the Survey Lab ends.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that a breach of this pledge may result in severance of my relationship with the Survey Lab and/or the pursuit of legal action.

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Please keep the accompanying statements for your records and return this pledge to:

The University of Chicago Survey Lab  
6030 S Ellis Ave  
Chicago, IL 60637