1. In surveys, the truthfulness of the data collected is the basis for the credibility of the survey. Any lapse in a survey which incurs a risk on the participants as a class or on individuals presents a breach of trust between researcher and respondent. Such a breach of trust, in addition to raising the certainty of cancellation of the University backing of the project, raises the possibility of legal action against the grantee and the granting agency. Even more seriously, it is conceivable that a single lapse may be all that is needed to break the bond of trust between the researchers and respondents so that future surveys conducted by other researchers may become either meaningless and/or impossible to complete.

2. Researchers must follow the safeguards specified in Public Law 91-513 (Privacy Act, text available at http://www.justice.gov/opcl/privstat.htm) to ensure the confidentiality and security of all information obtained from human subjects. Questionnaires, inventories, interviews, schedules, and other data-gathering procedures must be carefully designed to ensure that only information relevant to the project will be obtained.

3. Researchers should not guarantee absolute confidentiality to human subjects. Participants should be informed that information from the study may be shared with officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and other appropriate government agencies [add other groups as necessary]. While participants’ identities generally must be kept confidential, participants also should be informed that researchers will report this information in certain situations as required by law (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, infectious diseases).

4. Before survey use, forms should be kept secured and serialized by number (or other identifier) to prevent pre-release of the survey that could compromise the study by prejudicing results or by creating opportunity for distribution of counterfeit forms.

5. Respondent (completed) forms and reference lists must be treated as confidential, and should be coded and kept in locked, secure files (i.e., a file or cabinet with a combination lock). Access to forms should be limited to authorized persons, and a sign-out, sign-in procedure should be instituted to monitor access.

6. If the information is to be stored electronically:
   a. The shipment, delivery and transfer of all data, printouts and files between offices and institutions may require careful controls.
   b. Distinct separation of the data from identifiable individuals must be maintained. In no case should the names of the participants, or the identifying code be computerized. If identifiable numerical identifiers are necessary for file editing, they should be deleted as soon as the editing is complete.
   c. Upon coding, and electronic storage, original forms must be destroyed by shredding or witnessed burning.

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d. Access to the electronic data should be on a limited basis, again by authorized and identified persons only.

e. Since complete data raises the possibility that some individuals might be identified as case studies if a sufficiently detailed question is asked of the data, particular care must be maintained to assemble the information to prevent such identification. Responses from uniquely identifiable individuals, groups, or companies must never be filed in such a manner that the information can be identified by source.

f. Data must be embedded in computers in a long composite field; i.e., long strings of densely coded digits.

7. If analysis is conducted on a subsample of the population, special care must be taken to be sure that the smaller group size does not lead to unintentional disclosures.

8. Reporting of the results of surveys, research, case histories, and facts resulting from studies places a special burden on the researcher, whether the report is in the form of a research paper, news release, or a newspaper story. The following factors must be impressed on all researchers involved in a study:

   a. There is no statute of limitations on the confidentiality of subject information. All researchers must agree to refrain from identifying subjects.

   b. Incidental identification of a subject may well occur under any one of the circumstances listed below, or in any combination thereof:

      1) The study involves a small sample size.

      2) The total population from which the sample is drawn is small.

      3) The general characteristics of the aggregate population are stated directly or indirectly. Size of town, community character (e.g., industrial, agricultural center, suburban, education community, etc.), and general location may be sufficient to identify the town, and, possibly, research participants.

      4) Any confluence of characteristics of family structure (size, sex distribution of children, ages, marital evolution), details of personal characteristics, or expressions of individuality which together would permit statistical identification.

9. The usual case history contains all of these factors and must not be released without being thoroughly concealed. One method of concealing such case histories is to reconstruct a case history by using "reversal" of characteristics (fat for thin, etc.). Such reversal should be analyzed against other similar cases to ensure that accidental reassignment does not occur. If this method is used, it is essential to be certain that the data not contain a "typical" case history based on average characteristics. Again, it is essential to be certain the published study does not contain a perfect "average" individual.