

Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise



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**IHE IT Infrastructure (ITI)  
White Paper**

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**Analysis of Optimal De-Identification Algorithms  
for Family Planning Data Elements**

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**Published**  
Revision 1.1

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## Foreword

30 Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) is an international initiative to promote the use of standards to achieve interoperability among health information technology (HIT) systems and effective use of electronic health records (EHRs). IHE provides a forum for care providers, HIT experts and other stakeholders in several clinical and operational domains to reach consensus on standards-based solutions to critical interoperability issues.

35 The primary output of IHE is system implementation guides, called IHE Profiles. IHE publishes each profile through a well-defined process of public review and trial implementation and gathers profiles that have reached final text status into an IHE Technical Frameworks.

This white paper is published as of December 2, 2016. Comments are invited and can be submitted at [http://www.ihe.net/ITI\\_Public\\_Comments](http://www.ihe.net/ITI_Public_Comments).

General information about IHE can be found at: <http://ihe.net>.

40 Information about the IHE IT Infrastructure domain can be found at: [http://ihe.net/IHE\\_Domains](http://ihe.net/IHE_Domains).

Information about the organization of IHE Technical Frameworks and Supplements and the process used to create them can be found at: [http://ihe.net/IHE\\_Process](http://ihe.net/IHE_Process) and <http://ihe.net/Profiles>.

45 The current version of the IHE IT Infrastructure Technical Framework can be found at: [http://ihe.net/Technical\\_Frameworks/](http://ihe.net/Technical_Frameworks/).

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## 1 Introduction

This document, the IHE IT Infrastructure (ITI) Analysis of Optimal De-Identification Algorithms for Family Planning Data Elements White Paper, describes the analysis performed by the ITI Technical Committee when selecting the optimal de-identification algorithms to fulfill the De-Identification for Family Planning use case published in the IHE Quality, Research, and Public Health (QRPH) Family Planning Trial Implementation Supplement, Volume 4.

### 1.1 Purpose of the De-Identification Algorithms for Family Planning Data Elements White Paper

This white paper is intended to describe the rationale for the selection of the de-identification algorithms for each IHE QRPH Family Planning data element. The Family Planning Annual Report (FPAR) de-identification analysis was conducted balancing two conflicting perspectives:

- The clinical subject matter expert whose tendency will be to want to keep as many data elements as possible at as high a level of fidelity as possible; and
- The security and privacy subject matter expert whose goal it is to apply the most restrictive algorithm possible to safeguard the overall data set as much as possible.

To do this, we:

1. Identified whether each data element is a direct identifier, indirect identifier, or simply data that does not need to be de-identified
2. Discussed the purpose and need for each data element
3. Asked a subset of the following questions from the De-Identification spreadsheet for each of the data elements:
  - Can it be deleted?
  - Can it be left in with no value?
  - Can it contain a substitute value as a random number? (Fixed length or original length?)
  - Can the attribute name or value be substituted?
  - Can the value be substituted for a different but meaningful value?
  - Can the value be substituted for a different but meaningless value?
  - Can the value be kept in escrow or provided by a third party and therefore segregated from the main data set?
  - Can the value be pseudonymized?
  - Can the value be made fuzzier by using a numeric or statistical algorithm?
  - Can the value be made fuzzier by using a random code set?

- Can the date/time be collapsed?
- 140 • Can the days be generalized to weekly values?
- Can the date of birth (DOB) be generalized to age?
- Can the value be generalized by statistical adjustment?
- Can the time of day be generalized to a specialized time of day?
- Can the day be generalized to a date of the week? (Weekend vs weekday)?
- 145 • Can the value be shifted by a random offset?
- Can the value be moved to a day of the week/month?
- Can the day, month or year be removed?
- Can the value be truncated?
- Can the value be substituted by a code?
- 150 • Can it be generalized to a geographical location?
- If/when date and time is generalized, must longitudinal consistency be maintained?
- When geographical locations are generalized, must longitudinal consistency be maintained?
- When the value we are trying to mask is substituted by a code, must longitudinal consistency be maintained?
- 155 • When precision is removed, must longitudinal consistency be maintained?
- When outliers for values that usually lie in a specific range are substituted with floor/ceiling values, must longitudinal consistency be maintained?
- Can the value be replaced by a pseudorandom value that is recoverable?
- 160 • Can the value be replaced by a sequential value that is recoverable?
- Can the value be manually edited to be less identifiable?
- 4. After the first pass through each data element was completed, and a preliminary de-identification method selected, the entire set of de-identification algorithms was reviewed as a whole to evaluate both their effectiveness at reducing risk, as well as identifying if any of the de-identification algorithms went too far and negatively impacted the performance measures for which the data is needed. These secondary passes through the data set and additional fine-tuning of algorithms are documented as “usability” and “threat” analyses later in this document.
- 165

## 170 1.2 Intended Audience

There are two intended audiences for the De-Identification for Family Planning supplement and whitepaper:

- 175 1. Developers who will implement the de-identification algorithms into their software. This audience should start with the IHE QRPH De-Identification for Family Planning supplement, and only refer to this whitepaper for background information where needed.
2. Clinicians, researchers, data analysts, and others who seek to understand how and why the selected de-identification algorithms were chosen for each data element. This whitepaper is targeted at this audience.

## 1.3 Comment Process

180 IHE International welcomes comments on this document and the IHE initiative. They can be submitted at [http://www.ihe.net/ITI Public Comments](http://www.ihe.net/ITI_Public_Comments).

## 1.4 Open and Closed Issues

### Closed Issues

- 185 1. How do we reconcile the two audiences? Audience analysis:
  - For ITI we are more concerned with the De-ID readers, not Connectathon implementers or other typical ITI members (so the TF is not necessarily optimal)
  - For QRPH we ARE concerned with implementers, and therefore the TF/TI supplement route IS optimal
  - 190 • QRPH audience are the people who are responsible for Family Planning data from a regulatory or fiduciary perspective, who need to execute on the de-identification (e.g., in the U.S. this could be a Title X grantee, Office of Population Affairs (OPA) data contractor, or a HIE) who would be gathering Family Planning data and ensuring De-Identification us completed
  - 195 • The other audience will be vendors who want to go fully automated with family planning data reporting. That will mean that their system not only capture the data, but trigger the de-identification and send the final report in a way that is conformation with the De-ID for Family Planning algorithms so they are transmitting as little PHI as possible.
  - 200 • Therefore, in order to satisfy the QRPH audience a TF document is needed, whereas to satisfy the ITI audience, once this supplement is completed and QRPH takes ownership, CPs to the De-ID whitepaper based on lessons learned as well as an accompanying educational PowerPoint should be sufficient.

- 205 • We can also publish the FPAR specific pieces as a U.S. national extension. The existing Family Planning Profile is both international and contains Volume 4 components.
  - Conclusion – create these artefacts:
    - Audience: Analysts who need to update the FAMILY PLANNING De-ID Profile and other derivative profiles/processes/etc.
      - 210 • **Output:** “Everything else” in the current De-ID document, as well as the threat analysis and spreadsheet, etc. – a.k.a. “supporting materials”
    - Audience: FAMILY PLANNING de-ID implementers
      - **Output:** Family Planning De-identification Profile (pages 14-17?)
      - **Output:** Guidance for reviewing the profile
    - Authors of de-ID handbook who need to know how to improve the handbook
      - 215 • **Output:** list of challenges/gaps for improving the de-id handbook
2. The unknown sex will have a higher risk, and we may need to re-assess what to do if the value is unknown later. E.g., anybody declared as unknown, their whole data set is restricted from reporting rather than attempting to de-identify it.
- 220 If they identify as Unknown, but a pap smear is performed, can we classify them as female based on the data? Need to return to the discussion about the unknowns. Leaving this element in increases the risk for the male individual since for example for Title X only 8% of the population consuming family planning services is male. Female gender numbers are used to measure contraceptive effectiveness. For males, the BMI calculation is different so we do need the binary at minimum. There are enough
- 225 other reasons to know number of males that the best method may be to completely drop any encounter level data for patients that identify as unknown. The risk to that approach is that differences in numbers reported may identify the number of unknowns at a given site; however, it is possible to lose encounter level reports for other reasons so we need to determine the likelihood of identifying unknown genders. As a result, a two-step
- 230 approach may be best, where the service site itself would:  
Use a binary and ask individuals to pick “Female” or “Male” if they can; and  
Redact entire encounter level data for patients that identify as “other” and do not submit that encounter at all.
- 235 After repeated discussion, the committee concluded that encounter documents where the Administrative sex was listed as “other” that this value should be changed to female for de-identification purposes.
3. Hashing is not useful for the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) data element because the values are too obvious. For round one, we agree that it is needed and can be reduced to a

- 240 YES/NO. For round two, we need to determine if there is a way to reduce the risk for the population for which the answer is YES.
- Given that the data set is a large population, people with a limited language proficiency in English are still fairly numerous so the group of people affected by a “YES” is not an extremely high risk of identifiability (~600 000 in the last year).
4. How do we pilot the results of this effort?
- 245 The analysis is expected to be done by the Title X program prior to going live with Protected Health Information (PHI).
5. Can we even do this with Clinical Document Architecture (CDA<sup>®1</sup>)? I.e., Are the new data elements state-able in a CDA document? (w.r.t mandatory fields, etc.?)
- 250 a. For data elements where the de-identification algorithm transforms the data element away from its original data type, is it possible to transmit the new data type in CDA?
- b. Not using base CDA, you would have to define and use an extension
- c. If it is or is not possible, what is the preferred approach for formatting the new set of data? (FHIR<sup>®2</sup>, CDA, flat file, etc.?) – May want to use a format that R supports, such as comma delimited or flat XML/JSON
- 255 6. What do user/family planning organizations think about replacing their current data fuzzing practices to use the ones specified in this document for harmonization purposes and to lower overall risk and to further align the data so that data analytics work?
- a. We are aware that some organizations are already generalizing some dates to the first day of the month, rather than the current model of week/year or month/year. What do
- 260 other organizations do/prefer in this area?
- Most organizations that responded to public comment indicated that it would be preferable to allow the centralized de-identifier to de-identify once, instead of fuzzing locally. Many organizations responded that they are unable to do local fuzzing or de-identification.
- 265 Additionally, week/year plus an identifier of sequence of visit in the instance of multiple visits per year was the preferred method for de-identifying visit dates.
7. How do you measure the linkage to care for HIV positive patients? Specifically:
- b. Referrals to care,
- c. Date of last pap test/how long since last pap test, etc.?

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<sup>1</sup> CDA is the registered trademark of Health Level Seven International.

<sup>2</sup> FHIR is the registered trademark of Health Level Seven International.

- 270 d. If a patient needs something within 90 days and it turns out to be 91 days because of  
the date de-identification identified in this profile, will this cause issues when  
calculating a performance measure?
- 275 i. If yes, how do organizations with fuzzing practices account for those now? For  
example, if someone is measuring the percentage of positive CT cases treated  
within 14 and 30 days (2 separate measures) then they may build a buffer around  
the days to account for fuzzing. This is not a concern outside of the agency.  
Should we be concerned if data are fuzzed at the agency level and then aggregated  
and “re-fuzzed” at higher levels?

280 Comments indicated that slight deviation from 90 to 91 days is not an issue, as well as  
strong preference for handling of sensitive HIV linkages as a separate report.

8. At the present time, it is unclear whether more than the grantees should have access to the  
mapping table for provider identifiers.

Public comment feedback indicated no requests for access to mapping tables.

285 Mapping table access policy will be determined by OPA for FPAR 2.0. Severe restriction  
of access to mapping tables is strongly recommended.

9. At what level of the Title X service network should de-identification occur? Please  
submit commentary as to whether you as a Title X Grantee, sub-recipient or service site  
feel you possess the capability, resources and desire to perform de-identification or if it is  
preferable for OPA to fund a centralized point of de-identification (third party vendor) to  
whom you will submit your identified data to. Please note:

- 290
- De-Identification at a lower level of the network, i.e., at the grantee or sub-recipient  
level may negatively impact the level of detail in the data, e.g., collapsed age  
categories.
  - For data accuracy purposes, the fewer points of de-identification the better. If there is  
295 only one third-party who is responsible for de-Identifying the data sets, there will be  
less potential for error, and fewer possibilities for over-fuzzing data or negatively  
impacting longitudinal consistency.
  - De-identification of contraceptive methods for “low probability types” should be  
300 made only at the de-ID contractor level, otherwise grantees, subrecipients, and sites  
will be forced to report many of their users in supergroups. New or LARC (Long  
Acting Reversible Contraceptive) users would likely be reclassified into a supergroup  
and OPA would lose information on the uptake of new or LARC methods.  
Information about the specific types of new and LARC methods (IUD or implant) is  
needed to examine barriers, training and TA needs, etc. This will result in the loss of  
305 helpful analytic information for OPA.

310

- However, some Grantees or State Health Departments, or even service sites may desire to de-Identify themselves prior to submitting data to the centralized FPAR repository.
- Please comment and let us know if a single de-identification point is possible, or if multiple points need to be planned for.
- What are the concerns, if any, if data were reported in an identified form to a centralized/third party for de-identification?

De-Identification by a single, centralized body was preferred by most of those who provided feedback.

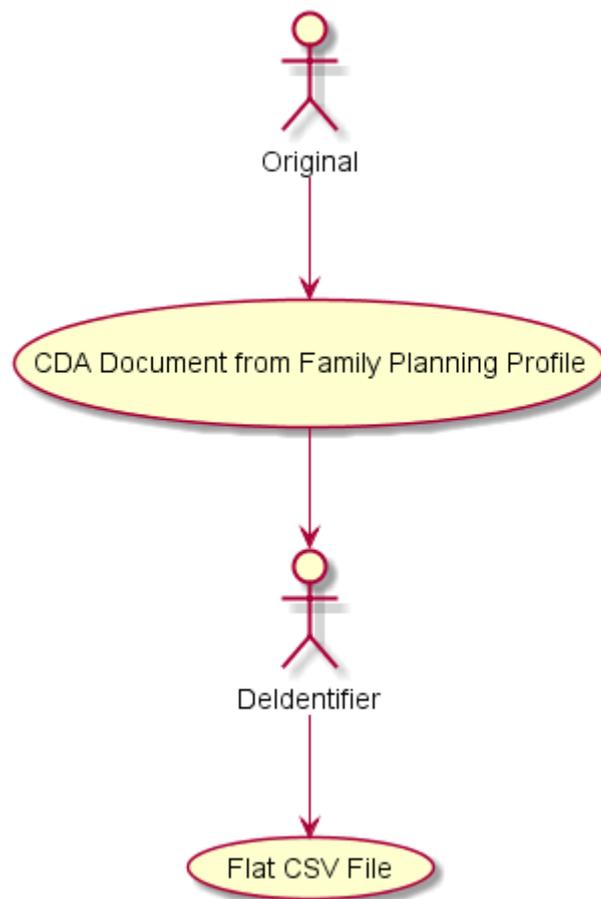
315

## 2 De-Identification goals for Family Planning Data Elements

This section contains a high-level analysis of the data elements described in the QRPH Family Planning Profile Volume 1 Appendix B.

### 2.1 Problem Description

320 The De-Identification process involves consuming the original Family Planning CDA documents as inputs, and creating a new, De-Identified for Family Planning Comma Separated Value (CSV) file where each row in the CSV file corresponds to a de-Identified Family Planning CDA document.



325

**Figure 2.1-1: De-Identification for Family Planning Process Diagram**

330 The data elements must persist in some manner after de-identification algorithms have been applied for the purposes of health services research (e.g., performance measurement in family planning). The data collected may be used for program planning and budgeting, basic monitoring

of program performance and adherence to the scope of a funded project, clinical quality improvement initiatives, to determine whether clients are receiving access to a broad range of family planning services and methods, and whether services are being delivered to the intended populations.

335 In order to focus discussions, we have selected the U.S. Office of Population Affairs (OPA) Title X Family Planning Annual Reports (FPAR)<sup>3</sup> use case as our example.

## 2.2 Definitions

340 Anonymization: A process that is intended to irreversibly remove the association between a subject and information that can identify the subject. If the process is intended to be reversible and a new identifier is substituted for the subject’s real identifiers, then the process is called pseudonymization

De-Identification: Any process that removes the association between a subject’s identity and the subject’s data elements. Anonymization and pseudonymization are types of de-identification.

345 PHIN VADS: Public Health Information Network Vocabulary Access and Distribution System (PHIN VADS) from CDC <https://phinvads.cdc.gov/vads/SearchVocab.action>. Public resource to document standard code sets like race, health insurance.

350 Pseudonymization: A particular type of anonymization that removes the association between data and a subject and introduces a new identifier that establishes a bidirectional-mapping between that subject and the new identifier. Pronunciation guide: “soo-DON-imm-ization”, rhymes with optimization

## 2.3 Conventions

This section intentionally left blank.

## 2.4 Use Cases

355 OPA requires the collection of family planning service delivery data in the form of the FPAR as a condition of its grant awards. The office uses the data for purposes similar to those listed above in Section 2.1, but also requires the data in order to justify its budget to Congress and to allocate sufficient funding to support unmet need for family planning services in specific areas of the U.S. and its territories. While de-identification discussions may include international scope and use cases, the conclusions as to optimal de-identification algorithms for a given data element  
360 relate to the Title X use case in the United States. Notes may be included to increase applicability to international perspectives but must not be considered complete or exhaustive. Anyone wishing to utilize these data elements in programs other than Title X should conduct their own analysis, considering local needs and legislation.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/title-x-family-planning/research-and-data/fp-annual-reports/>

365 The FPAR use case involves collection of family planning and reporting data from Title X grantees, sub-recipients, and service sites that provide a wide range of family planning and related preventive health services.

370 The identified data that might result from the data set described in the IHE QRPH Family Planning Profile is used for clinical purposes. A de-identified data set is needed for reporting and performance measurement purposes. It is important to note that the de-identified data set is not intended to be suitable for all research purposes, as that will result in too broad and identifiable a data set<sup>4</sup>. Data elements that may be useful to some researchers for some purposes may still be redacted or segregated into separate reports in order to lower the risk to vulnerable patients.

For purposes of risk analysis and exposure of the de-identified data set, our assumptions include:

- Data is collected by the up to 4100 service sites that comprise the Title X network
- 375 • Data is de-identified by a single, central de-identification third party
- Data is submitted in a de-identified manner to OPA
- De-identified data is made available to authorized staff from OPA headquarters and staff from OPA’s family planning service grantees and their subrecipient agencies

380 The risk posture of this data set is not the same as making the data publicly available, however with potential access numbering in the thousands, securing this data set is still a significant challenge that must be considered during the de-identification process.

Additional scoping discussion:

- 385 • In clinical trials, there is a regulatory requirement to notify patients of potential adverse events resulting from clinical trial activity, which may require re-identification of the individual. Unlike clinical trials, there is no regulatory requirements to notify patients of potential adverse events resulting from service performance reviews. As a result, re-identification of patients is not as critical for this use case.
- Additionally, since the FPAR data will have already been used to provide treatment and services to the patient, the de-identified data is not needed for that purpose.

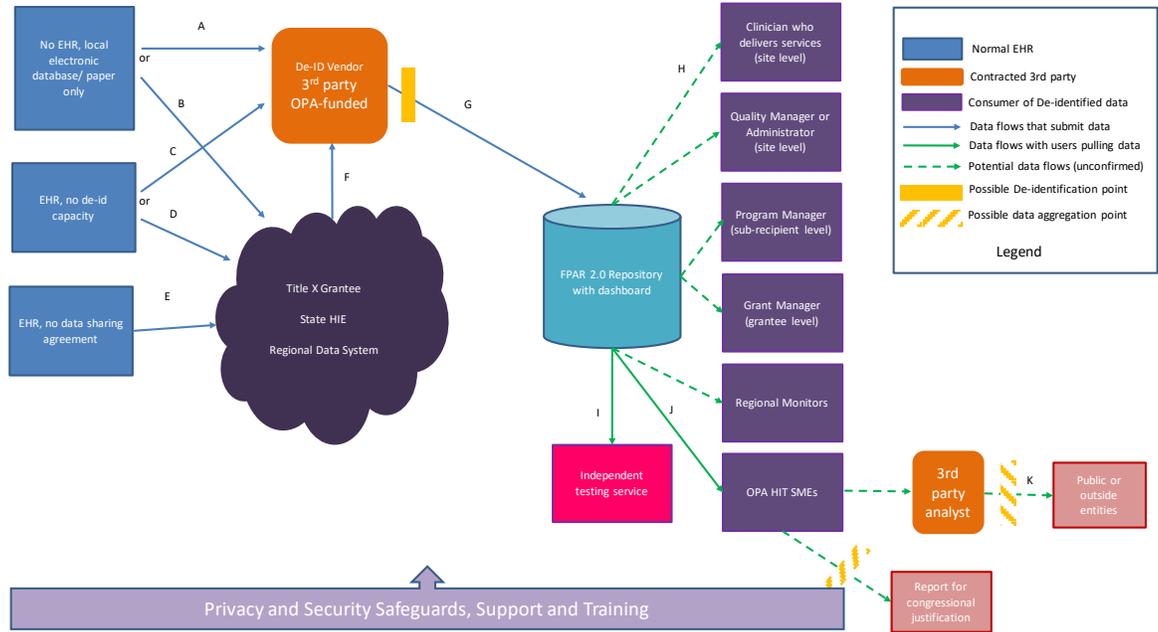
390 From an architectural perspective, the FPAR use case depends on de-identification being performed prior to submission to the host organization. This means de-identification could be conducted by a third party intermediary performed at the source EHR. However, multiple points and levels of de-identification pose a risk to the accuracy and longitudinal consistency of the data and therefore after public comment feedback a single, centralized de-identification third party  
395 architecture was agreed upon.

It is important to note that all data flows below indicate the submission of family planning CDA documents only, even though the same participants may also be submitting other types of CDA

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Native Hawaiians living in Montana, who are under the age of 18, may be very easy to identify even without the rest of their demographic data.

documents through the same or similar workflows. These other document types are out of scope for this whitepaper



400

**Figure 2.4-1: Data Flows in the Title X Family Planning Annual Report Use Case**

## 2.5 De-Identification Methods

405 De-identification, anonymization, and pseudonymization are processes that reduce the probability of data being associated with a specific individual.

Anonymization and pseudonymization are the two types of de-identification. Anonymization is used for one-way de-identification for situations where there is no requirement to identify the patient based on these records. Pseudonymization is a type of de-identification that can be reversed, and is used when there is a requirement to be able to identify the patient based on these records at a later date. Re-identification may require contacting third parties to perform this task.

410 De-identification is also used to reduce risks such as bias in clinical studies or clinical reviews. De-identification is not often thought of in the context of treatment because you usually must associate the patient with his/her data in order to treat the patient. Some healthcare services, such as HIV testing, are delivered anonymously or pseudonymously. De-identification is more often  
415 an essential tool for secondary uses of data such as clinical trials and analytics.

De-identification removes data that are not strictly required for the intended purpose of those data.

- Anonymization disassociates all identifiers from the data;

- 420 • Pseudonymization uses controlled replacements to allow longitudinal linking and authorized re-identification. An example of pseudonymization is the use of an alias when that person is admitted to a hospital.

425 Clinical trials usually employ pseudonymization. Clinical trial processes remove identifying information, such as the patients' demographics, that are not required. Where attributes about the patient must be preserved, different methods are used to obscure the real identity while maintaining the needed information. For example, most clinical trials replace the original patient ID and record numbers with a clinical trial ID and a subject ID. Only the clinical trial manager knows both numbers. A reviewer that needs to inform a patient about a finding must contact the clinical trial manager. Only the trial manager can determine the actual patient hospital and patient ID from the clinical trial ID and subject ID.

430 De-identification lowers, but does not eliminate, the risk of re-identification. The mapping table relating facility ID to provider ID and patient ID must be well protected to preserve privacy. A poor choice of pseudonymous ID, such as a hash of patient name, enables easy re-identification.

435 A teaching file is an example of an anonymization scrubbing process. Teaching files, such as radiological images illustrating a specific patient condition, are manually reviewed, file-by-file, field-by-field, to determine which fields are needed for the intended instructional purpose, and to determine if the field (or fields) could be used to re-identify the subject of the images. Often textual descriptions of the patient condition are rewritten to retain the useful meaning, because narrative text is often critical to the purpose of instruction. There is no requirement to be able to identify the patient later, so all traces of the patient should be removed and the data made fully  
440 anonymous.

Maintenance and repair logs for equipment and software are a frequent patient disclosure risk where anonymization is very appropriate.

## 2.6 Data Models

445 The following table contains a high-level list of the IHE Family Planning Profile data elements, along with the suggested default De-Identification algorithm. The overall purpose of collecting these data is to create clinically relevant performance measures designed to aid the quality improvement efforts at local clinics and to track trends in family planning services. Clinically relevant performance measures may relate to preconception health (documenting BMI, screening for pregnancy intention, etc.) and prescribing (percentage of patients prescribed highly effective  
450 contraceptive methods versus those prescribed lesser effectiveness methods).

If data is submitted that lies outside the scope of this analysis, and thus does not have a default algorithm identified, the default action for that data element should be to delete it. For unexpected dates that are submitted, either delete them if possible or otherwise generalize them to month and year.

455

**Table 2.6-1: Data Element De-identification Algorithms**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Patient Id type</b>	<b>De-Identification algorithm</b>
Facility identifier	Indirect	Mapping table
Clinical Provider identifier	Indirect	Mapping table
Patient identifier	Direct	Mapping table
Visit Date	Indirect	Generalized to week of year plus indicator of visit order
Date of Birth	Indirect	Convert to age in years. For clients over 50, grouped and mapped to “over 50”.
Administrative Sex	Indirect	For values of “Male” or “Female” forward the data unchanged. For Administrative Sex values of “other” change them to “Female”
Pregnancy History	Indirect	Redacted
Limited Language Proficiency	Indirect	Collapse all forms to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) TRUE or LEP FALSE.
Ethnicity	Indirect	Only the values “2186-5 Not Hispanic or Latino” or “2135-2 Hispanic or Latino” may be used. Any other input value must be converted to “2186-5 Not Hispanic or Latino”.
Race	Indirect	Collapse to 5 OMB categories plus Other. For each county, establish which races are below the threshold of 50 people per county. For those races, group them into “Other”
Annual Household Income	Indirect	Convert to percentage of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
Household Size	Data	Convert to percentage of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
Visit Payer (U.S. Only)	Indirect	Convert to Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Vocabulation Access and Distribution System (VADS)
Current Pregnancy Status	Indirect	Generalize to YES/NO/UNKNOWN
Pregnancy Intention	Data	Unchanged
Sexual Activity	Data	Unchanged
Contraceptive Method at Intake	Data	Unchanged.
Reason for no contraceptive method	Data	Unchanged.
Contraceptive Method at Exit	Data	Unchanged.
Date of Last Pap test	Indirect	Redact the day of the month, and use Week and Year only in the format of yyyyWww where week 52 of 2014 would appear 2014W52
HPV Co-test Ordered	Indirect	Redact the day of the month, and use Week and Year only in the format of yyyyWww where week 52 of 2014 would appear 2014W52
CT Screen Ordered	Indirect	Redact the day of the month, and use Week and Year only in the format of yyyyWww where week 52 of 2014 would appear 2014W52
GC Screen Ordered	Indirect	Redact the day of the month, and use Week and Year only in the format of yyyyWww where week 52 of 2014 would appear 2014W52

Element	Patient Id type	De-Identification algorithm
HIV Screen Ordered	Indirect	Redact the day of the month, and use Week and Year only in the format of yyyyWww where week 52 of 2014 would appear 2014W52
HIV Rapid Screen Result	Indirect	Delete. HIV reporting will be handled separately.
HIV Supplemental Result	Indirect	Delete. HIV reporting will be handled separately.
Referral Recommended Date	Indirect	Delete. HIV reporting will be handled separately.
Referral Visit Completed Date	Indirect	Delete HIV referrals. HIV reporting is required for the HHS HIV linkage to care performance measure, however HIV data is sensitive and the HIV pools sufficiently small that a separate mechanism will be established for reporting on these data, such as reporting these values to a separate aggregate database.  For non-HIV referrals redact the day of the month and use Month and Year only
Systolic blood pressure	Data	Unchanged
Diastolic blood pressure	Data	Unchanged
Height	Indirect	Unchanged, except for values below 59 inches or above 76 inches. For values below 59 inches, convert to 59 inches For values above 76 inches, convert to 76 inches
Weight	Indirect	Unchanged, except for values below 100 lbs. or above 299 lbs. For values below 100 lbs., convert to 100 lbs. For values above 299 lbs., convert to 299 lbs.
Smoking status	Indirect	Unchanged

## 2.7 De-Identification algorithm analysis

### 2.7.1 Facility identifier

460 From a health services research perspective, the facility identifier is needed, at a minimum, to compare services or outcomes at the level of a small geographic region such as a county or township. When measuring outcomes or service provision, it may also be beneficial to compare different sites. Additionally, data contributors consuming this de-identified data set for their own planning purposes would need some way to distinguish outcomes or services provided across

465 facilities. Some form of longitudinal consistency is needed for these purposes, so this data element cannot be deleted, and cannot be null.

470 The De-Identification spreadsheet<sup>5</sup> that accompanied the De-Identification whitepaper<sup>6</sup>, identifies each data element as being of a particular kind of direct or indirect identifier, and indicates the most important questions that need to be answered from the list of de-identification methods in Section 1.1 above for that data type. These individual question and answer pairs are left in for this data element, to illustrate the decision process, but will be included in the narrative in subsequent sections.

The Facility identifier is identified as being closest to either a Person Name or Address. As such, the questions that must be answered in order to determine de-identification requirements are:

475 • Does this data element require longitudinal consistency to be maintained after de-identification?

Yes. For example, in order to stratify performance measures and service delivery by facility in order to monitor variations in quality efforts and patient outcomes.

480 • Can it be deleted?

No, as noted above.

• Can it be left in with no value?

No.

• Can it contain a substitute value as a random number? (Fixed length or original length?)

Yes, as long as we identify a way to keep this value longitudinally consistent.

485 • Can the value be kept in escrow or provided by a third party and therefore segregated from the main data set?

Yes, but it may not be worth the cost of paying a third party for this purpose and effort of keeping them up to date. However, since the Clinical Provider ID, and Patient ID need to be pseudonymized using a confidential mapping table, it makes sense to use the same approach for Facility ID since we are doing it anyway.

490 • Can the value be pseudonymized?<sup>7</sup>

Yes. A pseudonymized set of facility identifiers is possible. The pseudonyms must be: consistent, not shared with partners, etc. Deployments can determine whether to use a mapping table, or assign ownership of pseudonym updates.

495 • Can the value be replaced by a sequential value that is recoverable?

No. This does not apply to this type of data.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ihe.net/uploadedFiles/Documents/ITI/IHE\\_ITI\\_Handbook\\_De-Identification-Mapping\\_Rev1.1\\_2014-06-06.xlsx](http://www.ihe.net/uploadedFiles/Documents/ITI/IHE_ITI_Handbook_De-Identification-Mapping_Rev1.1_2014-06-06.xlsx)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ihe.net/uploadedFiles/Documents/ITI/IHE\\_ITI\\_Handbook\\_De-Identification\\_Rev1.1\\_2014-06-06.pdf](http://www.ihe.net/uploadedFiles/Documents/ITI/IHE_ITI_Handbook_De-Identification_Rev1.1_2014-06-06.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Requirements internationally for pseudonymization may be stricter than the requirements in the U.S.

- Can it be generalized to a geographical location?

Maybe, depending on the purposes of the analysis. If geographic reporting is good for the consumer of this data set, then this is an acceptable algorithm.

500 It is important to note that in certain legal jurisdictions the legal protection needed for the data changes once it has been de-identified. These regulations are subject to change, so the de-identification processes must be adaptable.

505 In the USA, part of the clinical trial process is governed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This body is sometimes known as an Independent Ethics Committee, or an Ethical Review Board. The IRB is governed by Title 45 CFR Part 46 of the federal regulations which are subject to the “Common Rule” which states that federally funded clinical trials must have an IRB, and that the IRB must guarantee that it will provide and enforce protection of human subjects. The IRB accomplishes this, in part, by a pre-trial review of the protocol, and specifically reviews risks (both to human subjects and to the learning objectives of the trial).

510 Part of the human subject risk considered by IRBs is that to patient privacy, which most nations require protection of. In the U.S., regulations state “IRBs should determine the adequacy of the provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of the data [see Guidebook Chapter 3, Section D, "Privacy and Confidentiality"]” One effective method to help reduce both study bias and privacy risk is to use data that has been pseudonymized.

515 The answers to the above questions, as well as consideration of the IRB requirements, indicate that some form of pseudonymization is ideal for a Facility Identifier due to the requirement for longitudinal consistency, as well as the need to be able to group observations for a single facility (cross-sectional consistency) and facility based analysis (calculating measures at the facility level).

520 Types of pseudonymization optimal for Facility Identifier:

- Use of a new mapping table created specifically for this purpose, or an existing mapping table such as the Title X or one maintained by the Guttmacher Institute. The risk inherent to this approach is keeping the existing table up to date.
- Request facilities to manage their own anonymized/different facility ID known only to them at the time of submission and will be used for research submissions only.
- Hashed identifiers.

530 As identified during the usability analysis of the de-Identified data elements, it was determined that a mapping table is the preferred approach to de-Identifying the Facility Identifier. This means that a table will be maintained by an appointed organization, such as a contracted third-party that contains all of the originating Facility identifiers, as well as the list of de-identified values that they are mapped to. For example:

Facility ID of Origin	De-Identified Facility ID (Example only)
12678	111-111

Facility ID of Origin	De-Identified Facility ID (Example only)
92457	222-222
92774	333-333
92837	999-999
	777-777

535 Identifier mapping should be generated using a standardized algorithm, using a cryptographically strong randomly assigned identifier.

### 2.7.2 Clinical Provider identifier

540 Uses of this data element differ across different countries. In the U.S., consumers of the de-identified data set may want to track outcomes down to the provider level. For example, to identify providers who screen for chlamydia among populations who don't need it. In the U.S., this tracking is permitted by law. However, in Europe this may be viewed as tracking individual employees without predetermined cause.

545 This data element could be deleted or left with no value, though the cost of deleting this data element is removing granularity of the data at the individual level. Some countries in Europe would actually mandate the redaction of the level of reporting, and require that a problem be identified at the facility level before being considered to have sufficient cause to monitor at an individual level.

550 It is possible to pseudonymize this data element as well, especially since a linked provider ID is rarely needed outside of the facility. The National Provider Identifier (NPI) used in the U.S. is tied to practice level and practice specialty and it may be possible to convert the provider ID to the practice level and only use that, provided that individual level analysis is not needed.

555 Anonymized data could come in as anonymized, but with a known mapping table that is heavily protected. Management of this table could be defined in governance for a given project. Governance could state that in the U.S. Title X grantees can have access to the mapping table and compare performance measures by providers, but that OPA has no need to do so. Given this, the preferred approach is a mapping table; however, the determination of where this mapping occurs, prior to submission to OPA, is a critical component.

### 2.7.3 Patient identifier

560 The Patient identifier is needed in the de-identified family planning data set to track longitudinal consistency of the data. In other words, longitudinal consistency is when data is tracked over time and linked to each patient over that period of time even though the patient itself is not known. As a result, in order to achieve longitudinal consistency, a de-identified patient identifier is needed to link individual records to a unique, but unknown, patient. For family planning performance measures, some form of a patient identifier is needed to track things including changes in health and care status for a given patient.

565 As another example, if a yearly report includes data on 10,000 patient visits conducted, without longitudinal consistency it will be impossible to tell if that is 10,000 unique patients with one visit each or 2,000 patients with different visit frequencies.

When implementing, it is important to consider the tolerance for errors in longitudinal consistency. For example: A very tight/low tolerance may require a centralized authority to  
570 create tight pseudonyms and maintain them. If you have a higher tolerance, you may be able to leverage a hashed/random algorithmic pseudonymization.

Higher tolerance may be possible in this use case. Algorithmic substitution would provide some level of pseudonymization provided the algorithm is strong enough. E.g., “Use a random number generator to replace the ID with a random ID number”. The issues with this approach are that the  
575 random number generation needs to be sufficiently random, AND loss of the mapping table makes re-identification and longitudinal consistency impossible.

The value could be kept in escrow or provided by a third party and therefore segregated from the main data set, and this may be the ideal method under certain circumstances. However, there are possible drawbacks. A key flaw is that it provides a single point of failure. Also, access control  
580 and security safeguards for the escrow system must be rigorous and workflow and policy around the third party escrow usage are challenging to implement. (i.e., changing sites, sites may not request pseudonyms in a timely manner, etc.)

This is a value that could be pseudonymized, and a potential de-identification method is to agree on a hashing method. For example, identify the Patient ID as a value that must be included in a  
585 hashed section of the document, and agree on how the Patient IDs will be represented so that the hashed values will always be interpreted in the same way. A flaw with this method is that it is vulnerable to a brute force attack.

Another possible method of pseudonymization is to use two-stage pseudonymization. For example, assign a block of pseudonyms to the site, and then download the responsibility to the  
590 site to manage pseudonymization for their own internal patient IDs. Currently, site-specific IDs are difficult to track, so this method does not significantly impact the quality of the data. A potential issue is the method may not be consistently applied and would be difficult to manage.

A third possibility is the use of a one-time key generator be used. The typical algorithm is to identify a short data block, like the name of the clinic and a sequence number and then encrypt it  
595 with AES. The key secrecy is not that critical, but you can use the encrypted result as a unique patient ID.

This analysis indicates that, assuming workflow, policy and access control safeguards make escrow an impractical solution, one-way algorithmic pseudonymization may be optimal; however, the requirement for implementations to specify the retention duration of the local  
600 mapping table must be made clear.

Identifier mapping should be generated using a standardized algorithm, using a cryptographically strong randomly assigned identifier.

#### 2.7.4 Visit Date

605 The visit date is used to measure trends, intervals between visits, intervals between assessment of pregnancy intention and positive pregnancy test results, etc. As multiple clinic visits by the same patient on the same day are unlikely to occur, time of day is not a required level of detail and must be removed. However, age at time of visit should be calculated before this data element is de-identified.

610 One approach is to generalize the visit date to week of year values (e.g., week 1, week 2, week 3). There are situations where patients come in more than once a week, but it may be just as useful to say “3 times in week 1” as the interval between days in that week may not be a necessary detail. As a result of feedback submitted during public comment, an indicator of visit order per week of year was added. Visit dates shall henceforth be de-identified using a yearWweek-visitsequence format, where:

- 615
- "year" is the 4 digit year of the visit (e.g., 2014)
  - "Wweek" is the two digit week within the year (W05 for the fifth week; W52 for the last week)
  - "-A" is the visit order within the week (A = 1st visit of the week, B = 2nd visit of the week)

620 For example, the 2<sup>nd</sup> visit of the fifth week of 2014 would be formatted as: 2014W05-B.

If we want to measure if a referral loop was completed within a 90-day window, then any adjustment would need to be made identically to all associated dates. For example, “add 5 days for all days for patient X, and add 3 days for all patients Y”. However, this is unlikely to be executed correctly/consistently and could introduce a lot of risk and error, as well as additional maintenance of mapping tables.

625

Another risk of the adjusting by days approach is with annual reporting where there are annual goals for users and the dates slide outside the reporting year, etc.

Our conclusion is that the time component must be omitted if present. Dates must be generalized to week of year values.

630 Note 1: Measures that involve the calculation of days may be affected by this algorithm. Reporting periods may need to be fuzzed +/- one week to account for this.

Note 2: For smaller service sites that have low volume weeks, using weekly values may still be a high re-identification risk. Those sites may want to consider alternate methods of de-identification or possibly other methods of data submission provided they do not have a significant impact on the overall data set.

635

Note 3: When other dates that are recorded, such as test dates or referral dates match the visit date, those dates must be modified to match the weekly value of the visit date.

### 2.7.5 Date of Birth

640 Date of birth is used in family planning to do cross-tabulation with reproductive lifespan, reproductive lifecycle and to determine services needed at certain ages.

The Date of Birth is needed to know how old the patient is, because according to various clinical guidelines certain procedures must be performed at certain ages, e.g., pap smears for women ages 21 and over. On the performance measure side, report data is often grouped according to age brackets for the population (for example, adolescents, adults over 20, etc.).

645 Since the de-identified data set will not be used for clinical purposes, the performance measure side mentioned above is the core focus here.

As per the De-Identification spreadsheet that accompanied the De-Identification whitepaper, the Date of Birth is equivalent to the DOB field. As such, the questions that must be answered in order to determine de-identification requirements are:

650 Historically, the FPAR has collected age in “brackets.” Age brackets are fairly specific and may need to be fairly granular at some levels. 10 year brackets may be a problem. 5 year intervals may be manageable except at the edges. Age brackets may not be acceptable without a standard pre-selected. In addition, for different measures, an individual may fall into a different age bracket.

655 However, for certain performance measures, such as pap smears, the age groups need to be quite granular. Brackets that are too broad can be a problem due to guidelines changing frequently. If large groups were used it would be impossible to assess if those guidelines are being followed.

660 When the Family Planning CDA document is produced, it will contain a date of birth. If it is decided later on to calculate age at date of X test, then the document will already contain an age, so it may be possible to remove the DOB. However, date of the test for which age is calculated may not be the same as age at the time of the document, so we may end up having an age at the top of the document as well as observation based ages.

665 Current recommendation is to calculate the age at date of visit and submit that as a whole number (i.e., if the person is 18.6 at the time of the visit, the age reported will be “18”. For clients over 50, generalize their age to “over 50”.

### 2.7.6 Administrative Sex

Administrative Sex is not a clinical or genetic statement; it is used for administrative purposes. Administrative Sex also does not equal gender.

670 Administrative Sex is driven by the administrative categories that are needed by the facility and the people they interact with.

This data element is needed to analyze care statistics for both females and males. Both females and males are served in Family Planning.

Female numbers are used to measure contraceptive effectiveness. Administrative sex is also needed as a primary demographic characteristic as the users. Leaving this element in increases

675 the risk for the male individual since for example for Title X only 8% of the population consuming family planning services is male, however there are sufficient reasons to know number of males that the best method may be to completely drop any encounter level data for patients that identify as unknown.

680 The risk to that approach is that differences in numbers reported may identify the number of unknowns at a given site; however, it is possible to lose encounter level reports for other reasons so we need to determine the likelihood of identifying unknown genders. As a result, a two-step approach may be best, where the service site itself would:

- Use a binary and ask individuals to pick “Female” or “Male” if they can; and
  - Redact entire encounter level data for patients that identify as “other” and do not submit that encounter at all.
- 685

After repeated discussion, the committee concluded that encounter documents where the Administrative sex was listed as “other” that this value should be changed to female for de-identification purposes. This approach is the simplest and will not have a significant impact on performance measures.

690 Please note that HL7<sup>®8</sup> changed the name of “Administrative Sex” to “Administrative Gender” in August 2012, which has caused some confusion. The term used here is “Administrative Sex” because that is what is currently used in the IHE QRPH Family Planning Profile.

### 2.7.7 Pregnancy History

695 Pregnancy History is a stratification variable that can have fertility implications in the clinical realm. In the performance measurement realm, this data element may not be necessary.

Number of pregnancies and number of births may be valuable information to assist in understanding the population and to group women by parity level. For the purposes of use identified by Title X, this data element will not be collected at the national level. Outside of Title X, it could still be of use to measure performance such as certain providers not wanting to provide specific services to women of certain age or profiles. If other use cases exist that need this data element, implementers will need its conduct their own analysis to determine the best de-identification algorithm for that use case.

700

### 2.7.8 Limited Language Proficiency

705 The data element describes family planning users who do not speak the national dominant language (e.g., English in the U.S.) as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand the dominant language and therefore require language assistance services (interpretation or translation) in order to optimize their use of health services.

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<sup>8</sup> HL7 is the registered trademark of Health Level Seven International.

710 CDA allows four different conceptualizations of language use: understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.

Limited Language Proficiency is an important demographic descriptor. The history behind this HHS requirement is to ensure that individuals with limited local language proficiency have appropriate access to services. This is a significant part of providing a safety net for individuals who have barriers to care, but the granularity of language information that can be described in  
715 CDA is not necessary for this purpose. The value set can be limited.

However, data is collected in the local system; the only data that should be submitted for performance measurement purposes is “LEP YES/LEP NO”. All other language data should be redacted. Given that the data set is a large population, people with a limited language proficiency in English are still fairly numerous so the group of people affected by a “YES” is not an  
720 extremely high risk of identifiability.

### **2.7.9 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a stratification variable used in performance measurement to track healthcare disparities by ethnicity. For example, in the U.S. 30% of Title X Family Planning users identify as Hispanic. Additionally, in the U.S., this is an important health disparities measure as The  
725 Department of Health and Human Services wants to make sure clients of certain ethnicities are not being denied appropriate care.

In some countries, this data element must absolutely be preserved and, in some countries, it must be removed. Deletion of this data element is left up to discussion in national extensions. In the U.S., this data element is mandatory for federal reporting.

730 It is possible to substitute ethnicity values with a less precise value set. In the U.S., this value set has already been reduced to two very broad categories of “Hispanic or Latino” or “Not Hispanic or Latino”. However, this limited set does split the population down to 70% “Not” versus 30% for clients who are Hispanic or Latino. There could potentially be the addition of “Unknown”, which may not be needed given that 30% is still a large population. In areas where there are very  
735 few of either category, rules for cell suppression may be needed if the number of people reported in any kind of analysis would be lower than a pre-determined limit.

For the stated use case in the U.S., “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino” are sufficient. Note that current FPAR has three categories; Hispanic/Latino, Not Hispanic/Not Latino, and Unknown.

### **740 2.7.10 Race**

Race is used as a stratification variable to track healthcare disparities by race. For example, in the U.S., 21% of Title X users in 2013 were Black or African American.

In some countries, this data element must absolutely be preserved, and in other countries, it must be removed. Deletion of this data element is left up to discussion in national extensions. In the  
745 U.S., this data element is mandatory for federal reporting.

The data set can be generalized, using the 5 OMB categories. In the U.S., it is possible to accept up to 900 categories, but at minimum, the 5 OMB categories are necessary for performance measurement. Currently the categories are:

- 750 1002-5 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 2028-9 Asian
- 2054-5 Black or African American
- 2076-8 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 2106-3 White

755 In areas where there are very few of a given category, rules for cell suppression may be needed if the number of people reported in any kind of analysis would be lower than a pre-determined limit.

760 The recommended algorithm is to collapse the data set to the 5 OMB categories using the OMB guidelines [https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg\\_1997standards/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards/), plus one additional category of “2131-1 Other” to be used for unknown races, instances where the individual declined to answer, and other races. For each county, establish which races are below the threshold of 50 people per county. For those races, group them into “Other”.

Please note that CCDA<sup>9</sup> allows for reporting of two or more races. If two or more races are reported, de-identify each one as above.

765 In other words, where a “more than one” race exists, the additional race will appear in the original CDA document as a separate entry and each entry will be de-identified using the same method. I.e., a dual race of “Chinese” and “Polish” will be de-identified as “Asian and “White”.

### 2.7.11 Annual Household Income

770 Annual Household Income is asked for in order to assess whether the patient qualifies for the annual poverty level. This is calculated including the annual household size element as well. Additionally, there is a regulatory requirement on the combined household size and income. If the patient is “250% or below the federal poverty level”, then this is recorded as a demographic statistic. This data is often calculated incorrectly, so the raw data is requested as part of Family Planning reporting in order to ensure consistent calculation.

775 We cannot necessarily just record a binary “at or below poverty”. There is value to being able to establish your own meaningful income categories that correspond to issues that we know occur in healthcare so categories can be used here. For example, instead of \$19,543 per year, “under 20k” may be possible. The only concern here is that there is no standard referenced value set for these categories.

780 In the U.S., Categories are set by the federal government every year and cannot be established independently. The income categories in 2013 FPAR, which are based on the HHS poverty

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<sup>9</sup> CCDA is the registered trademark of Health Level Seven International.

guidelines published each year, are: Under 101%, 101-150%, 151%-200%, 201%-250%, over 250%, unknown/not reported

The value could possibly be substituted by a code, but this will come at a functional cost. The most appropriate code would be reimbursement categories.

785 It was decided that Annual Household Income is too difficult to generalize to categories. If this element is too identifiable it is possible to just submit the FPL percentage and drop both household income and household size, and accept the costs to the data granularity.

The conclusion reached is for the reporting organization to calculate and submit the FPL percentage in lieu of submitting Income AND Household size.

### 790 **2.7.12 Household Size**

Household size as it is defined in the IHE QRPH Family Planning Profile is data that is not identifiable, does not need to be modified and can be passed on unchanged. However, within the U.S., the household size is only used to calculate the FPL in conjunction with the Annual Household Income. Therefore, for de-identification purposes, the Household size will be  
795 calculated into FPL percentage and then deleted. See Annual Household Income for details.

### **2.7.13 Visit Payer**

This data element is used for performance metrics to see what percentage of people are uninsured, are served by Medicaid, etc. Categories used are from the payment source typology from the public health data standards consortium archived by Public Health Information Network  
800 (PHIN) Vocabulary Access and Distribution System (VADS):

- 1 MEDICARE
- 2 MEDICAID
- 5 PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE
- 23 Medicaid/SCHIP
- 805 32 Department of Veterans Affairs
- 38 Other Government (Federal, State, Local not specified)
- 81 Self-pay
- NA No insurance
- 9999 Unavailable / Unknown

810 The smallest category in the U.S. currently contains 1.8 million people, so if we use the categories listed above then this may be sufficient generalization to not be very identifying.

The conclusion reached is to use the PHIN vocabulary described here.

### **2.7.14 Current Pregnancy Status**

815 This data element is needed for performance measurement purposes to justify why a method of contraception is not assigned. This data point should be passed through unchanged.

Current categories in the Family Planning Profile are:

- Not Pregnant, by patient report
- Not Pregnant, by test result
- 820 Sterilized
- Postmenopausal
- Pregnant, by patient report
- Pregnant, by test result

825 For longitudinal measurement, this element could also be useful to count individuals who come in as pregnant after contraception has been assigned. However, this may not be an accurate measure. There is a risk of pairing this element with “pregnancy intention” as a use for listing unintended pregnancies. Similarly, connecting this with pregnancy outcomes (if someone comes back as a subsequent visit as no longer pregnant).

The decision made is to generalize to Yes, No or Unknown.

### 2.7.15 Pregnancy Intention

830 Pregnancy intention is used in performance measurement to evaluate the proportion of patients that were assessed in the last year.

835 Pregnancy intention has a defined value set that has only four entries and is not considered very identifiable. This field is validated and a tested question for clinical assessment. The question that is asked is “Would you like to become pregnant in the next year?” If the individual is not female, this question may be asked as “Would you like to become a parent in the next year”.

- Yes, or Okay either way
- No, but maybe in the future
- No, I never want to be pregnant/have a child
- Unsure

840 If the individual is not female, this question can be asked as “Would you like to become a parent in the next year”. The answers may use the same value set and as a result are not necessarily identifying the individual’s gender. This data element can be passed along without applying any de-identification algorithms.

### 2.7.16 Sexual Activity

845 This data element is used in performance measurements to establish a correct denominator for clients who have been sexually active in the past 3 months

The value set is limited to “yes/no/unknown” and is not considered to provide enough detail to identify someone. This data element can be passed along without applying any de-identification algorithms.

850 **2.7.17 Contraceptive Method at Intake**

Contraceptive method at intake is used in performance measurement to compare “method at intake” and “method at exit” to determine if patients gained access to more effective contraception methods during the visit. Where there are multiple methods in use, the QRPH Family Planning Profile instructs users to report the most effective of the methods listed.

855 The value set for this data element comprises a number of methods, but it is possible that not all are necessary for performance measurement. The full list, however, may be useful for analytic options.

The current value list includes:

Diaphragm or cap	Emergency Contraception (EC)
Female condom	Female sterilization
Fertility Awareness Method (FAM) FAM	Implant
Injectables	IUD/IUS
Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)LAM	Male Condom
Male relying on Female method	None
Oral contraceptive pills	Patch
Spermicide	Sponge
Vaginal Ring	Vasectomy
Withdrawal	Decline to answer

860

For de-identification purposes, this data point may be passed through unchanged.

**2.7.18 Reason for No Contraceptive Method**

Reason for No Contraceptive Method is used to further specify who should be included in a given analysis. For example, don’t include people seeking pregnancy in an analysis about why condoms are not used. Additionally, it is useful for documenting why someone chooses to exit an encounter without a contraceptive method. From a performance perspective if they are not at risk of pregnancy then it is allowable for them to exit the encounter without a method.

865

- Abstinence
- Same-sex partner
- Seeking pregnancy
- Declined all methods
- Other

870

This data element can be passed along without applying any de-identification algorithms. Where there is significant concern for low probability types, “Other” should be used.

875 Note: For international projects, the seeking pregnancy and same-sex partner elements may have different sensitivities and should be evaluated independently.

### **2.7.19 Contraceptive Method at Exit**

Please see Contraceptive Method at Intake in Section 2.7.17 for details.

880 To date, we are not aware of any way in which the change from method at intake to exit can be used to identify an individual. As a result, we conclude that this data element can be passed on unmodified, with the categories “Highly Effective”, “Moderately Effective”, and “Less Effective” used for low probability types.

### **2.7.20 Date of Last Pap test**

885 Date of last pap test is used for a performance measure on cervical cancer screenings, intervals between tests, etc. Time of day is not a required level of detail and should be redacted. As compared with the visit date however, the date of the last Pap test can be more de-identified. Where the data set identifies Cervical Cancer Screening, this date is to be used.

890 Often this data element is inaccurate when it is submitted and based on patient recollection at the month/year level. Where accuracy is possible, month/year may be used for research and performance measurement purposes.

The day can be removed and the value can be generalized to week and year.

### **2.7.21 HPV Co-test Ordered**

895 HPV co-test is a date used for performance measures on HPV screenings. This data element constitutes the date that the HPV co-test was ordered, and is often tied to a recent visit. The data provided is often more accurate than the date of the last pap test. However, it is used in the same way as date of last pap test above, and can be generalized to week/year without loss.

### **2.7.22 CT Screen Ordered**

900 The CT screen is a date used for performance measures on Chlamydia screening. This data element constitutes the date that the last Chlamydia test was ordered, and is similar to the HPV co-test element above and can be generalized to week/year without loss.

905 A potential issue with the generalization of the CT screen date to month/year is that the data may end up with an up to 2-month variance in the calculations for fitting within a 12-month window. This may impact overall compliance scores. The lack of precision may negatively impact the overall measures and their usability. This concern would not apply with a generalization to week/year.

### **2.7.23 GC Screen Ordered**

The GC screen is a date used for performance measures on Gonorrhea screening. This data element constitutes the date that the last Gonorrhea test was ordered, and is similar to the HPV co-test element above and can be generalized to week/year without loss.

910 **2.7.24 HIV Screen Ordered**

The HIV screen is a date used for performance measures on HIV screening. This data element constitutes the date that the last HIV test was ordered, and is similar to the HPV co-test element above and can be generalized to week/year without loss.

**2.7.25 HIV Rapid Screen Result**

915 The HIV Rapid Screen Result is an actual result whose value set is Negative, Reactive, Invalid.

Test results are considered among the highest sensitivity PHI, along with mental health information. The HIV Rapid Screen Result is collected in order to demonstrate all the data elements necessary in order to demonstrate all the linkage to care variables.

To demonstrate linkage to care in a U.S. setting the following information is necessary:

- 920
- Date the screen was performed at health provider A,
  - Results of the screening test from provider A and date results were received,
  - If results indicate the need for referral, the date that the referral was set up with health provider B and when this referral was communicated to the patient,
  - Date that the appropriate referral path to provider B was completed,
- 925
- Possibly, date the completed referral path was documented by provider A

With this set of information, it is possible to determine the number of days between each step in the series of events. In some cases, targets may be established to ensure that referrals between providers are not missed, for example, the time from when a patient knows about the need to complete the referral visit and when that visit is completed should be no greater than 90 days.

930 Other examples of intervals that can delay appropriate care may be the time it takes to receive information from a testing laboratory or the time it takes a clinical site to notify patients of results that require follow-up. Instead of sending actual dates, intervals may be calculated locally and then indicator data elements can be submitted to report the number of days between events.

935 The HIV related measures are highly sensitive, and the pools of patients with data for these measures is relatively small. The preference would be to report a flag only, or possibly separate them out from the rest of the data

One option would be to have HIV tracking within the service site/care organization and only disclose a yes/no on whether performance was achieved within the 90-day period.

940 Another option is to have a performance measure for all non-HIV activity, and have all HIV elements deleted. This would result in a lower risk database to expose to the entire network. If we had a separate database which only included the HIV data, then we could have restricted access to only this database.

This would mean deleting the following data elements:

- HIV Rapid Screen Result

- 945
- HIV Supplemental Result
  - Referral Recommended Date
  - Referral Visit Completed Date

The actual numbers that need to be reported are the HIV Positivity and Linkage to care numerator and denominators described here: <https://blog.aids.gov/2012/08/secretary-sebelius-approves-indicators-for-monitoring-hhs-funded-hiv-services.html>

950

Concerns with the approach of removing the HIV related data elements is that additional research on HIV will not be possible. In the U.S., a separate summary report may be necessary to allow service sites to report aggregate performance goals for HIV Positivity and Linkage to Care, instead of at the individual level. Until that separate mechanism is established, for de-identification purposes the HIV data should be deleted.

955

### **2.7.26 HIV Supplemental Result**

- This data element is to be deleted from the de-identified data set.

### **2.7.27 Referral Recommended Date and Referral Visit Completed Date**

For performance measurement purposes, the referral recommended date and referral visit completed date are used to identify if visits like smoking cessation, weight management, etc. are being met. For the purposes of de-identification, all HIV Referral recommended dates and Referral completed dates shall be redacted, but other dates can be forwarded.

960

Note: The Referral Recommended and Referral Visit Completed date for performance measurement of other chronic diseases can be challenging to capture, however from a privacy and security perspective do not pose a significant additional de-identification risk. The proposal is that if these data elements are collected, then:

965

- Remove HIV referral dates
- Generalize dates to week/month/year or month/year, if possible, for non-HIV referral dates

### **2.7.28 Systolic and Diastolic blood pressure**

970

The Systolic and Diastolic blood pressure data elements are used in performance measurement for blood pressure screening goals for male clients as a significant contributor in fertility assessment, as well as for pregnant female clients.

These data elements are not considered to be highly sensitive and may be considered as just data rather than indirect or direct identifiers and do not require de-identification. As such, these values should be passed through unchanged.

975

### 2.7.29 Height and Weight

980 Height and weight are used in performance measurement of BMI. Weight may also be useful for measurement of effectiveness of contraception in patients over 175lbs/79kg. Additionally, there are multiple methods for calculation of BMI.

While the data set discussed here should not be used for research, performance metrics on contraception prescription given certain population characteristics could be really useful. This data could also be used to facilitate quality improvement programs in reproductive health and primary care settings.

985 As a result, it is desirable to have both the height and weight values and not attempt to calculate and submit only the BMI.

Upper and lower bounds of height and weight may be more than just data, whereas values within normal boundaries can be considered benign in terms of identifiability. For values outside of maximum or minimum values, report at the limit value.

990 We propose that height and weight be edited when they are above or below certain maximum or minimum values. For values outside of the acceptable range, they shall be reported at the limit value rather than the specific height or weight value.

For height, pass through unchanged, except for values below 59 inches or above 76 inches. For values below 59 inches, convert to 59 inches. For values above 76 inches, convert to 76 inches.

995 For weight, pass through unchanged, except for values below 100 lbs. or above 299 lbs. For values below 100 lbs., convert to 100 lbs. For values above 299 lbs., convert to 299 lbs.

Upper and lower limits for height and weight are based on the NHIS survey:  
[ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health\\_Statistics/NCHS/Dataset\\_Documentation/NHIS/2010/samadult\\_freq.pdf](ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/Dataset_Documentation/NHIS/2010/samadult_freq.pdf)

### 1000 2.7.30 Smoking status

Smoking status is used for performance measurement purposes to report that clinicians are assessing the smoking status of patients in family planning.

In the U.S., Smoking status is encoded as per the Meaningful Use data set:

Current every day smoker	449868002
Current some day smoker	428041000124106
Former smoker	8517006
Never smoker	266919005
Smoker, current status unknown	77176002
Unknown if ever smoked	266927001
Heavy tobacco smoker	428071000124103
Light tobacco smoker	428061000124105

1005

The Meaningful Use value set represents a certain degree of fuzzing, as clinical providers may be documenting more detail on smoking status but are only required to record as per the above categories.

This identifier is considered to not significantly contribute to identification of an individual.

1010

Approximately 10% of women reported smoking during the last 3 months of pregnancy according to the 2011 PRAMS. As a result, these are fairly large categories. This data can be passed through unchanged.

## Appendix A: Sample FP CDA documents and their De-Identified documents

1015

### A.1 Patient: JB

1020

JB is a 16-year-old G-0 P-0 in the clinic for STI screening and well woman exam. Last menstrual period (LMP) was 3 weeks ago. No history of STI. BP: 110/75. Height: 157.5 cm. Weight: 58 kg. Intermittent condom use. Last unprotected sex was 2 weeks ago after which she used oral emergency contraception. Since JB’s condom use is only intermittent and emergency contraception is not an effective method, her method at intake is listed as “none”. Wants to have children “at some point, but no time soon”. Wants to use pills for contraception going forward. Non-smoker. Rapid HIV test is negative. Post visit, chlamydia results are positive and gonorrhea results are negative. No insurance can be billed at the time of the visit. Demographics: White, native U.S. English speaker. Since 16 year olds seldom know their family income, JB’s FPL is calculated based on her own \$5000 income from a part-time job, and her household size of 1. White, native U.S. English speaker. JB’s household size is 3, and her family’s annual income is \$9000 therefore the Income for JB is approximately 44% of the Federal Poverty Level (see ASPE here: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/2015-poverty-guidelines#guidelines>).

1025

1030

Visit date: 22 Dec 2014

Geographic location: HHS Region 4 (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee)

Data Element	Original Data	Data after application of de-identification
Patient Identifier	[patient ID from service site]	[Mapped patient ID=333-333]
Date of Birth	5 June 1998	16
Administrative Sex	Female	Female
Language of Communication	en-US	LEP FALSE
Language Proficiency	r	
Preferred Language	True	
Race	White=2106-3	2106-3
Ethnicity	Not Hispanic or Latina=2186-5	2186-5
Clinical Provider	[provider ID from service site]	[Mapped Provider ID = 222-222]
Visit Date	22 Dec 2014	2014W52-A
Facility identifier	[facility ID and address from service site, but from HHS Region 4]	[Mapped facility ID = 111-111]
Number of Total Pregnancies	0	DELETED
Current Pregnancy Status	Not pregnant, by test=2	NO
Pregnancy Intention	No, but maybe in the future= N	N
Sexual Activity	True	True

Data Element	Original Data	Data after application of de-identification
Contraceptive Method at Intake	None=20	None=20
Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Intake	NULL	NULL
Last Cervical Cancer Screen (Date of last Pap test)	NULL	NULL
HPV Co-Test	22 Dec 2014	W52 2014
Contraceptive Method at Exit	OCP=7	7
Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Exit	NULL	NULL
Chlamydia trachomatis Screen Order	22 Dec 2014	2014W52
Neisseria gonorrhoeae Screen Order	22 Dec 2014	2014W52
HIV Screen Order	22 Dec 2014	2014W52
HIV Rapid Screen Result	HIV Rapid Screen Result, Negative=NEG	DELETED
HIV Supplemental Result	NULL	DELETED
Referrals Planned	NULL	DELETED
Referrals Completed	NULL	NULL
Height	157.5 cm	62 inches
Weight	58 kg	128
Systolic Blood Pressure	110	110
Diastolic Blood Pressure	75	75
Smoking Status	Never smoker=266919005	266919005
Annual Household Income	\$9,000	FPL 44%
Household Size	3	DELETED
Insurance	No Insurance=NA	NA

1035 **A.2 Patient: MT**

1040 MT is a 52-year-old G-7 P-5 TAB-1 SAB-1 in the clinic to follow up on the results of an  
 1045 abnormal pap test she had at a different provider 4 months ago. LMP 1 week ago. History of herpes, but no other STI. Smokes 1 pack of cigarettes a day for past 30 years. BMI 29. BP 145/96 P 80 R 14. Prior pap history unknown, but she is pretty sure she had one when she was pregnant 9 years ago. Says she is certain that she doesn't want any more children and will use condoms for contraception in future. She brings in a copy of the letter from a visit 6 months ago that was sent to her regarding the abnormal pap test results. The letter advises her of the High-Grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion (HSIL) result, and tells her to make an appointment for a colposcopy. She has been unable to schedule an appointment until now. Rapid HIV test is negative. Declines gonorrhea and chlamydia screening as they were performed 6 months ago and

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found negative. 1 sexual partner for the last year. Demographics: Latina, native Spanish speaker. Private health insurance can be billed.

Visit date: 18 Mar 2014

Geographic location: HHS Region 6 (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas)

1050

<b>Patient Identifier</b>	[patient ID from service site]	[Patient Mapping Table Entry 2]
<b>Date of Birth</b>	1 Oct 1962	Over 50
<b>Administrative Sex</b>	Female	Female
<b>Language of Communication</b>	en-US	LEP NO
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	NULL	
<b>Preferred Language</b>	False	
<b>Race</b>	White=2106-3	2106-3
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Hispanic or Latina=2135-2	2135-2
<b>Clinical Provider</b>	[provider ID from service site]	[Provider Mapping Table Entry 2]
<b>Visit Date</b>	18 Mar 2014	2014W12-A
<b>Facility identifier</b>	[facility ID and address from service site, but from HHS Region 6]	[Facility Mapping Table Entry 2]
<b>Number of Total Pregnancies</b>	7	DELETED
<b>Current Pregnancy Status</b>	Not Pregnant, By Patient Report=1	No
<b>Pregnancy Intention</b>	NEVER	NEVER
<b>Sexual Activity</b>	True	True
<b>Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	Male Condom=10	10
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Last Cervical Cancer Screen</b>	12 September 2013	W37 2013
<b>Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	Male Condom=10	10
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Chlamydia trachomatis Screen Order</b>	12 Sept 2013	2013W37
<b>Neisseria gonorrhoeae Screen Order</b>	12 Sept 2013	2013W37
<b>HIV Screen Order</b>	18 Mar 2014	2014W12
<b>HIV Rapid Screen Result</b>	HIV Rapid Screen Result, Negative=NEG	DELETED
<b>HIV Supplemental Result</b>	NULL	DELETED
<b>Referrals Planned</b>	NULL	DELETED
<b>Referrals Completed</b>	NULL	DELETED
<b>Height</b>	160 cm	160 cm
<b>Weight</b>	74.8 kg	74.8 kg
<b>Systolic Blood Pressure</b>	145	145

<b>Diastolic Blood Pressure</b>	96	96
<b>Smoking Status</b>	449868002	449868002
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	\$24,738	FPL 125%
<b>Household Size</b>	3	DELETED
<b>Insurance</b>	5	5

### A.3 Patient: LD

#### Visit 1

1055 LD is a 36-year-old black male native English speaker who presents to clinic for STI screening and pain during urination. Non-smoker. He has had more than ten lifetime partners. BP is 110/80, Ht:5’11” Wt: 185. He reports using condoms consistently. He would like to have children “if possible” in the next 2 years. He tests positive for Gonorrhea and also has a positive rapid HIV result. He is treated with rocephin and azithromycin onsite at your facility for Gonorrhea and is referred to HIV primary care co-located in the same facility. He is started on  
1060 the standard beginning ARV regimen (NNRTI, a PI with Ritonavir and an INSTI).

Visit date: 2 Jul 2014

Geographic location: HHS Region 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia)

#### Visit 2

1065 HIV supplemental result (HIV-1/2 Antibody differentiation Multispot) was HIV-1 positive and client referred to HIV primary care.

Visit date: 4 Jul 2014

#### Visit 3

1070 Clinic staff confirmed that offsite appointment with HIV primary care was completed 42 days after the family planning visit. The record for this client-visit can be closed out.

Visit date: 15 Aug 2014

<b>Patient Identifier</b>	[patient ID from service site]	[Patient Mapping Table Entry 3]
<b>Date of Birth</b>	2 Jan 1978	36
<b>Administrative Sex</b>	Male	Male
<b>Language of Communication</b>	en-US	LEP No
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	NULL	
<b>Preferred Language</b>	True	
<b>Race</b>	2054-5	2054-5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	2186-5	2186-5

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<b>Clinical Provider</b>	[provider ID from service site]	[Provider Mapping Table Entry 3]
<b>Visit Date</b>	2 Jul 2014	2014W27-A
<b>Facility identifier</b>	[facility ID and address from service site, but from HHS Region 3]	[Facility Mapping Table Entry 3]
<b>Number of Total Pregnancies</b>	NULL	DELETED
<b>Current Pregnancy Status</b>	NULL	NO
<b>Pregnancy Intention</b>	No, but maybe in the future	No, but maybe in the future
<b>Sexual Activity</b>	True	True
<b>Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	Male Condom=10	10
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Last Cervical Cancer Screen</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	Male Condom=10	10
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Chlamydia trachomatis Screen Order</b>	2 Jul 2014	2014W27
<b>Neisseria gonorrhoeae Screen Order</b>	2 Jul 2014	2014W27
<b>HIV Screen Order</b>	2 Jul 2014	2014W27
<b>HIV Rapid Screen Result</b>	HIV Rapid Screen Result, Reactive=RE	DELETED
<b>HIV Supplemental Result</b>	POS1	DELETED
<b>Referrals Planned</b>	4 Jul 2014	DELETED
<b>Referrals Completed</b>	15 Aug 2014	DELETED
<b>Height</b>	180.3 cm	180.3cm
<b>Weight</b>	83.9 kg	83.9kg
<b>Systolic Blood Pressure</b>	110	110
<b>Diastolic Blood Pressure</b>	80	80
<b>Smoking Status</b>	266919005	266919005
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	\$47,252	FPL 235%
<b>Household Size</b>	3	DELETED
<b>Insurance</b>	NA	NA

#### A.4 Patient: JW

1075 JW is a 23-year-old G-0 Black female who has been with her partner for 2 years and they have decided to start a family. She is seeing you today for her Well Woman Exam. She is seeking advice as to how to proceed to assure a safe pregnancy. She smokes one cigarette per day and has a glass of wine every evening. She stopped her birth control pills 2 months ago and her LMP was 2 weeks ago. She takes multivitamins. BP 130/82, Pulse 80, Wt 190, Ht. 5’3”. Screening

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1080 today will include a Pap smear with HPV co-testing and HIV testing (results are negative), according to ASCCP and CDC STD guidelines. Preconception counseling will include tobacco and alcohol restriction, folic acid recommendations and assessment of her immunization status.

Visit date: 2 Aug 2014

1085 Geographic location: HHS Region 9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau)

<b>Patient Identifier</b>	[patient ID from service site]	[Patient Mapping Table Entry 4]
<b>Date of Birth</b>	17 Jun 1991	23
<b>Administrative Sex</b>	Female	Female
<b>Language of Communication</b>	en-US	LEP No
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	NULL	
<b>Preferred Language</b>	True	
<b>Race</b>	2054-5	2054-5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	2186-5	2186-5
<b>Clinical Provider</b>	[provider ID from service site]	[Provider Mapping Table Entry 4]
<b>Visit Date</b>	2 Aug 2014	2014W31-A
<b>Facility identifier</b>	[facility ID and address from service site, but from HHS Region 9]	[Facility Mapping Table Entry 4]
<b>Number of Total Pregnancies</b>	0	DELETED
<b>Current Pregnancy Status</b>	1	No
<b>Pregnancy Intention</b>	Y	Yes
<b>Sexual Activity</b>	True	True
<b>Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	None=20	20
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Intake</b>	Seeking Pregnancy=C	C
<b>Last Cervical Cancer Screen</b>	2 Aug 2014	2014W31
<b>Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	None=20	20
<b>Reason for No Contraceptive Method at Exit</b>	Seeking Pregnancy=C	C
<b>Chlamydia trachomatis Screen Order</b>	2 Aug 2014	2014W31
<b>Neisseria gonorrhoeae Screen Order</b>	2 Aug 2014	2014W31
<b>HIV Screen Order</b>	2 Aug 2014	2014W31
<b>HIV Rapid Screen Result</b>	HIV Rapid Screen Result, Negative=NEG	DELETED
<b>HIV Supplemental Result</b>	NULL	DELETED
<b>Referrals Planned</b>	NULL	NULL
<b>Referrals Completed</b>	NULL	DELETED

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<b>Height</b>	5 foot 3 inches	5' 3"
<b>Weight</b>	190 pounds	190#
<b>Systolic Blood Pressure</b>	130	130
<b>Diastolic Blood Pressure</b>	82	82
<b>Smoking Status</b>	449868002	449868002
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	\$22,738	FPL 143%
<b>Household Size</b>	2	DELETED
<b>Insurance</b>	Self-Pay=81	81

1090 **Appendix B: Usability Analysis of de-Identified data**

Based on the initial set of de-identification algorithms, and an analysis of the sample de-identified Family Planning reports listed in Section X.2 using those algorithms, the following concerns have been raised with regards to the usability of the de-Identified data for performance measurement purposes:

- 1095 1. Not having HIV positivity rates is a problem for HHS, and removal of HIV rapid screen result is an issue
2. Setting age group for Chlamydia screening to “People under 18” is problematic because we will lose our trends for under 15, and 15-17 year olds. These trends and measures are important for tracking beyond just the Chlamydia screening.
- 1100 Historically, these trends have been tracked by the Title X grantees based on identified data, and submitted to HHS as an aggregate report. There are three alternatives to balancing the usability issue and the risk of re-identification due to the small size of the under 15 pool of individuals. OPA should select from the following three alternatives:
- 1105 A. Continue to manage this trend reporting as a separate reporting stream so that the data submitted to the FPAR 2.0 database
- B. Perform an independent de-identification analysis, so that the separate database can remove many other data elements and have separate pseudonyms while keeping the more granular age
- 1110 C. Restrict the overall access to the FPAR 2.0 database so that the much more sensitive data is safeguarded better
3. Using single age instead of date of birth will affect the calculation (numerator/denominator inclusion/exclusions) of age-dependent performance measures. If M/D/Y is not an option, then W/Y or M/Y (assume birthdate on 15<sup>th</sup> day) will increase measure accuracy and comparability. Analysts will have discretion on the assumptions they make and the cases they include/exclude. The use of different assumptions about which cases to include/exclude will be a limitation in cross-clinic, cross-subrecipient, cross-grantee, etc., comparisons. If a female client turns 21 two days or even a month after the visit, but the provider decides to do the pap test early to eliminate the need for a repeat visit, then the proposed specification will make it appear as if the provider did not follow recommended guidelines. An age specification that is less blunt will allow the analyst to include cases for some weeks or days before or after the visit date.
- 1115 1120 There is a method used to calculate age and year to use a decimal to demonstrate if someone is 18 or 18.25 or 18.5 — or month and year.
- 1125 This can be an example of a missed opportunity, where the provider missed an opportunity to order a screening before the patient’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

- 1130 We need to answer the question of how many non-compliers would we discover if we had more granular birthdate/age information. The business concern is how accurate would our data be if we don't have this granularity.
- 1135 18.25, 18.5 and 18.75 would be enough to add to the usefulness of the data. This way the analyst could choose whether to include 18.75 in the numerator/denominator. Does this impose too much on the reporting agencies? Does this expand the size of the data that will be transmitted and calculated?
- 1140 If we don't provide people with the actual date of birth, data analysts will start making choices on how to compare grantee compliance etc. In that case, we would need to provide guidance on how to use the less granular data as a performance monitoring tool. For age granularity as with the previous item, the options are something that OPA will need to determine. i.e.:
- Submit separate aggregate report
  - Maintain a separate database
  - Accept the higher risk to the FPAR 2.0 database for all use cases and restrict access to it/add safeguards
4. STI Screen Order questions
- 1145 (1) Using the "screen order" date instead of a "test performed" date may overstate CT, GC and HIV testing if a test is ordered but a specimen is not collected/tested. This situation may occur if the specimen is collected at a different location or if the client is asked to return on/at a different day/time. Is there a way to ensure that a test is not counted unless the record also contains a result? Just a thought.
- 1150 (2) Reducing the date to M/Y will affect calculation of performance measures related to timely treatment (measured in days). While I recommend M/D/Y for screen order dates, a W/Y specification would get us closer to a more accurate measure calculation.
- Time of order and time of screen are less identifying than age. A statistical analysis on a representative sample of data is needed in order to determine if W/Y is still sufficiently large as to not be an issue.
- 1155 5. Last Cervical Cancer Screen questions
- W/Y date is preferable to M/Y to allow for more accurate calculation of Pap test performance measures.
- Last Cervical Cancer Screen:
- 1160 W/Y date is preferable to M/Y to allow for more accurate calculation of Pap test performance measures.
- Since order date is less identifying than age, a statistical analysis on a representative sample of data is needed in order to determine if W/Y is still sufficiently large as to not be an issue.

1165 **B.1 Threat cases for re-identification of family planning data:**

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A quick Google search on the term re-identification will yield many blogs, papers and studies describing where de-identified datasets were combined with publicly available databases in order to re-identify individuals. Most experts in this field agree that re-identification is not easy, but with sufficient resources and motivation, a poorly de-identified data set may be re-identifiable.

- 1170 One such example is the study described in the well-known paper *Identifying Participants in the Personal Genome Project by Name*<sup>10</sup>, by Latanya Sweeney, Akua Abu, and Julia Win, where they were able to re-identify individuals by comparing certain genomic markers against public information about their demographics. The paper concludes that some individuals can be identified using as little information as their date of birth, gender, and 5-digit zip code.
- 1175 In the section below we follow best practices and explore the most likely sources of threats to the Family Planning de-identified data set in order to ensure that we have considered whether the de-identification algorithms selected address such issues as the very high risk of including date of birth and gender in a data set.

### **B.1.1 Threat motivators and threat agents:**

- 1180 The following are potential motivators and actors who may want to identify certain types of individuals from the de-identified data. As shown below, we are not concerned with clinical providers using identified data for inappropriate purposes.
1. Targeting of people who have consumed family planning services of any kind (media, religious groups)
  - 1185 2. Targeting of people who have had or considered abortions (law enforcement, relatives, religious groups/religious police/religious authorities)
  3. Targeting of facilities and individual providers of family planning services (religious groups, relatives, hate based organizations)
  4. Underage contraception or sexual activity (parents, family/clan, religious groups/religious police/religious authorities)
  - 1190 5. Discovery of sexual activity of relatives or employees (parents, family/clan, religious groups/religious police/religious authorities, employers)
  6. Identification of vulnerable candidates for child abuse/prostitution (organized crime activity by corrupt community and local government authorities)
  - 1195 7. Transsexual or homosexual targeting (law enforcement, parents, family/clan, religious or political groups/religious police/religious or political authorities, employers)
  8. Discovering STDs and HIV status of friends, relatives or target groups or employers
  9. Illegal discrimination for work purposes (e.g., if someone is pregnant, trans, etc.)
  10. Theft of medical identity

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<sup>10</sup> <http://dataprivacylab.org/projects/pgp/1021-1.pdf>

- 1200        11. Theft of medical services  
             12. Insurance fraud  
             13. Use of family planning data as ancillary data to other big data analysis to see what  
                       correlates (e.g., correlation with schedules and other data for insurance or tax fraud)  
1205        14. Provider contract fraud (falsify data to get a better rating – create a bunch of fake patients  
                       that we never actually saw that you can't tell are not patients because they are de-  
                       identified)

### **B.1.2 Analysis of Threat cases**

1210        The following is an analysis of how the currently de-identified data could be combined and  
               attacked in the context of the threat cases listed above. Please note that motivated attackers are  
               often armed with information such as unexplained absences of a minor who was late coming  
               home from school: a relative who suspects that this individual had an encounter with a family  
               planning clinic could use the unexplained absence date as a visit date to narrow down the de-  
1215        Identified data set. Armed with the visit date, knowledge of their relative's age, and potentially  
               the region or location of the clinic they suspect was visited can narrow down the pool of  
               information significantly.

1220        The analysis contained in this section is still performed at a theoretical level and can at best  
               recommend risky data combinations to look for in a real data set. A statistical analysis of a  
               representative data set is still needed in order to determine where these risks are likely enough  
               that additional de-identification, or application of access control and other security restrictions  
               are necessary.

- 1225        1. It is feasible that motivated individuals who want to target or embarrass people who have  
               consumed family planning services in general could compare the de-identified family  
               planning database with other publicly available databases in order to see how many  
               individuals can be identified. An excellent analysis of such an attack on de-identified  
               published Netflix ratings to identify individual Netflix users is discussed in this paper:  
               [https://digital.lib.washington.edu/dspace-  
               law/bitstream/handle/1773.1/417/vol5\\_no1\\_art3.pdf?sequence=1](https://digital.lib.washington.edu/dspace-law/bitstream/handle/1773.1/417/vol5_no1_art3.pdf?sequence=1)  
1230        2. In order to identify people who have considered abortions, the following four data  
               elements could be used to identify a pregnancy that may have been aborted:
- Pregnancy intention
  - Sexual activity
  - Pregnancy status
  - Visit date
  - Contraceptive method (at intake or at exit)

- 1235 A motivated attacker could reduce the data set by using the above combinations, and then combining it with other databases or information to identify who the individuals might be.
- 1240 In other words, someone with a pregnancy intention of no, with a sexual activity of yes, and a pregnancy status of Yes on a visit date in March 2015, and then a pregnancy status of No in April of 2015 could be targeted as potential recipients of abortive services. Since pregnancy history is no longer being collected, the risk of identifying someone in this category is significantly reduced.
- 1245 Additionally, the contraceptive method (at exit) of Emergency Contraception could result in targeting of an individual for the same reasons as abortion. When the statistical analysis is performed, if the pool of people contains any identifiable individuals, ECP as a contraceptive method should be considered as a risk and should be further de-identified by creating category called “other effective method” and reporting people using ECP as “other”. However, this is an issue for performance measurement since the availability of these methods is an important measure of availability and quality of care.
- 1250 Alternatively, list the “method at exit” as something that the individual will be using after the ECP, such as condoms, etc.
- 1255 Conclusion: There is still a significant amount of risk related to this threat case. These data are still potentially PHI. The only way to determine whether the data included in this set is still identifiable is to apply the algorithms to a representative data set and perform a statistical analysis following one of the accepted statistical models.
3. Underage contraception or sexual activity:
- Age
- If the grouping of individuals listed as “under 18” is small, then the individuals could be highly identifiable.
- 1260
- It is worth noting that given a large enough longitudinal sample it will become possible to identify the birth month and year of a given individual when their age increments.
  - Age categories or a fuzzing algorithm could help reduce this risk, as well as infrequent submission of documents to the FPAR 2.0 repository – i.e., perform reporting on an annual or less frequent basis (Even though the FPAR 2.0 CDA documents may be submitted automatically as soon as they are generated, actual **reporting** on those documents is currently only required to be annual. This greatly reduces this risk, although reports can be submitted more often if service sites want to check where they are). Another strategy would be to release single-year data sets with collapsed categories and multi-year data sets with more cases and more granular categories. With more cases in every category the risk declines.
- 1265
- 1270
- Very low height and weight could also be used to reduce the size of the population in the pool and identify an individual

- Pregnancy status could also further shrink the pool
- 1275 **\*May want to say that you only need longitudinal consistency within a reporting year. In that case, the pseudonym tables for the patient ID should be flushed/re-anonymized once a year.**
- 1280 This may make the data less useful, and make it impossible to compare progress at the patient level over the course of many years. The longer data is kept, the more identifiable the individual becomes and this identifiability must be balanced with the data and measurement needs.
4. Discovery of sexual activity of relatives or employees:
- Individuals from strict religious environments who would want to search for their relative based on a suspected visit date and known demographics to find out if the answer to the “Sexual Activity” question is Yes
- 1285 Analysis: the technique used to de-identify the patient or provider ID must be strong enough for relatives to not be able to identify an individual’s new ID. (this is true for all attacks)
5. For the threat case of identification of vulnerable candidates for child abuse/prostitution, aside from the data combinations already listed above, there is not much else in the de-identified data set that could be used for this purpose.
- 1290
- Since pregnancy history or unusually early contraceptive use is already redacted
  - Age (attending a clinic and being in a certain young age group may be enough to result in targeting)
- 1295 The probability of this threat occurring is low with the “18 and under” generalization. If we move to “15 and under” and “15-17”, this threat case may become more of a concern. In 2013 for all FP users there were over 300k in the 15-17, and under 15 was 38k in 2013 and 45k in 2014. Under 15 females for 2014 there were 36, 626 individuals in the category. Broken out by region if the facility ID is re-identifiable, this may become a
- 1300 very small pool.
6. Transsexual or homosexual targeting
- Administrative sex – transsexual entries have been redacted, and submitters have been notified to either “pick one” or “don’t submit those patients”. This is effective for reducing identification of transsexual patients in the data set.
  - Reason for no contraceptive method – “same-sex partner” has been left in as an option. Depending on the data set, this may become identifying of a limited set of vulnerable individuals.
  - Threat analysis: Law enforcement or family/clan who work for the system may have access to these data. In that case they could combine reason for no contraceptive
- 1305

- 1310 method with visit dates, ages, height/weight, facility identifier to identify a homosexual individual.
- **Is this a risk in some areas? Should we further de-identify this by lumping same-sex partner in as “other”?**
7. Discovering STDs and HIV status of friends, relatives or target groups or employers
- 1315
- Since HIV information except for week/year of initial HIV screening has been redacted/put off into a separate report, this is fairly unidentifiable. If this information were to be included, it would contain a lot of identifying information for a vulnerable individual.
  - For other STDs such as HPV, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, since we generalized the test dates to week and year and the only information included is the test date, this is fairly un-identifying of sensitive data.
- 1320
8. Illegal discrimination for work purposes (e.g., if someone is pregnant, trans, etc.)
- Employers who are motivated to discriminate against homosexual or pregnant potential hires who would use publicly available demographics, regional and race/ethnicity to identify an individual and verify whether their “reason for no contraceptive method” is seeking pregnancy or same-sex partner
- 1325
- Analysis: If an employer wants to covertly not hire someone who has same-sex partners or is actively seeking pregnancy, they could use the above data set to create a list of “undesirable” individuals, but would need to still identify if the potential hire is part of this list. It is unlikely that the pool of candidates will be small enough for this to be identifiable. A family planning database may not be worth the effort in this scenario.
- 1330
9. Theft of medical identity
- A motivated individual who does not have health insurance or who otherwise wants to steal a patient’s medical identity in order to pose as that patient could mine the overall family planning database and compare it with publicly identifiable data to see if anyone in the database can be successfully re-identified along with their insurance information or other information.
- 1335
- Analysis: While the risk for identifying an individual when mining the overall database is yet to be determined based on statistical analysis of a representative data set, this particular threat case does not pose significant risk since there is not enough information in the family planning data to motivate someone who wants to steal a medical identity. Clinical studies and other health related databases would be more likely targets.
- 1340
10. Theft of medical services
- 1345

- 1350
- Thief has a motivation to conceal a theft of services by damaging the information used to detect theft. In other words, this is a risk to the data set, but not necessarily to identifiability. This is not something that can be solved with de-identification, but should be considered as part of the implementation of policy and procedures as well as technical safeguards for the FPAR 2.0 data

11. Insurance fraud

- 1355
- Thief who is likely an insider has a motivation to conceal a theft of services by damaging the information used to detect theft. In other words, this is a risk to the data set, but not necessarily to identifiability. This is not something that can be solved with de-identification, but should be considered as part of the implementation of policy and procedures as well as technical safeguards for the FPAR 2.0 data

12. Use of family planning data as ancillary data to other big data analysis to see what correlates (e.g., correlation with schedules and other data for insurance or tax fraud)

- 1360
- When ancillary data is available, indirect identifiers can be used to compare with other available databases to identify patients.

13. Provider contract fraud: not a risk for re-identification, this is more of a risk to the quality of the data. The way to avoid this risk is to ensure that any value or financial decisions are made based on the identified data set.

1365 Other approach: if you take the table that we have and eliminate the identifiers that we've deleted and the items that we have said are just data, you have the focused list of indirect identifiers and algorithms – what correlations are obvious there?

## B.2 Theoretical K-analysis:

1370 Until a data set is available, it is helpful to identify combinations of data elements that could be identifying. Once data is available, these combinations can be tested against that data set to see if a pool of individuals small enough to be identifying would result.

The first step is to look at the table containing our original assessment of whether the data element is direct/indirect/data and assess whether the de-identified element is now direct/indirect/data.

### B.2.1 Indirect identifier analysis

1375 For identifiers that are still indirect after de-identification, we need to look at two factors for each indirect identifier:

1. What is the smallest percentage of the pool that the indirect identifiers could result in?
2. Which indirect identifiers can be combined to identify small pools of individuals.

IHE IT Infrastructure White Paper – Analysis of Optimal De-Identification Algorithms for Family Planning Data Elements

Element	De-Identification algorithm	Type after de-ID	Smallest pool percentage
Facility identifier	Longitudinal consistency required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mapping table, maintained by a third party is the preferable path forward.</li> </ul>	Indirect	Remains 1 to 1
Clinical Provider identifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for deletion with loss of granularity at the individual provider level</li> <li>A mapping table to a pseudonymous identifier is the preferred path forward.</li> <li>Access control to this data element would need to be restricted to site-level access only, and only to the providers for that site. For all other access, the Provider Identifier would be redacted.</li> </ul>	Indirect	Remains 1 to 1
Patient identifier	Longitudinal consistency is needed for patient identifiers in order to track how many times patients consume certain services. Need to consider tolerance errors in longitudinal consistency. Low tolerance may require pseudonymization by a central trusted authority. Higher tolerance could rely on random or algorithmic pseudonymization/hashing. If it is possible to have a single point of de-identification, then use of a mapping table is preferred as it is less vulnerable to attack than hashing. However, if a more flexible model is required where multiple sources of de-identification exist, then hashing is the preferred approach. Recommendation now is a mapping table.	Indirect	Remains 1 to 1
Visit Date	Time component must be omitted if present. Dates must be generalized to week of year values. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures involving the calculation of days may be affected by this algorithm.</li> <li>When other dates recorded (e.g., test dates or referral dates) matching the visit date, those dates must be modified to match the weekly value assigned to the visit date.</li> </ul>	Indirect	Due to existing planned parenthood aggregation practices that lump visits into the first day of the month, other weeks have slightly lower numbers as a result. Besides this, there are no significantly smaller pools for this data element.

IHE IT Infrastructure White Paper – Analysis of Optimal De-Identification Algorithms for Family Planning Data Elements

Element	De-Identification algorithm	Type after de-ID	Smallest pool percentage
Date of Birth	Use age at time of visit, but generalize “edge” ages to the lower or upper or lower limit for that age. For clients under 18, generalize their age to “under 18”. For clients over 50, generalize their age to “over 50”.	Indirect	Under 18 = under 15 + 15 to 17 = 45, 863 + 298,839 = 344, 702  Once combined, under 18 is larger than 35- 39 (331,439) and larger than 40-44 (200,955) and over 44 (192,902).
Administrative Sex	A two-step approach may be best, where the service site itself would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a binary and ask individuals “for privacy reasons” to pick “Female” or “Male” if they can; and</li> <li>Redact entire encounter level data for patients that identify as “other” and do not submit that encounter at all.</li> </ul> <p>If at any point a patient identifies as “other”, change the value to “Female”</p>	Indirect	Where Title X users are men = <b>364, 661</b>
Limited Language Proficiency	Collapse all language data to “LEP YES/LEP NO”. Consider risk to population for whom the answer is YES.	Indirect	LEP YES = 522,944
Ethnicity	Already reduced to “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino”.  In areas where there are very few of either category, we may need rules for cell suppression if the number of people reported in any kind of cross-tab would be lower than a pre-determined benchmark.  Any other values must be converted to “Not Hispanic or Latino”	Indirect	Hispanic or Latino = 1,237,652
Race	At minimum, generalize to 5 OMB categories out of 900 possible categories in the value set.  In areas where there are very few in any category, we may need rules for cell suppression if the number of people reported in any kind of cross-tab would be lower than a pre-determined benchmark. (Especially in the case of Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders, as well as when multiple categories are used).  For each county, establish which races are below the threshold of 50 people per county and group into “Other”	Indirect	Native Hawaiian or other pacific = 39, 266  American Indians/Alaskan Native = 29,327

IHE IT Infrastructure White Paper – Analysis of Optimal De-Identification Algorithms for Family Planning Data Elements

Element	De-Identification algorithm	Type after de-ID	Smallest pool percentage
Annual Household Income/Household size	Report the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) percentage in lieu of Annual Household Income and Household Size values	Indirect	69% are under 101% = 2,840,650  Small pools are at higher end of economic status = 201-250% = 100,402 And over 250% = 226,918
Visit Payer (U.S. Only)	Use Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Vocabulary Access and Distribution System (VADS) categories as in the current profile	Indirect	Private health insurance = 453,535
Current Pregnancy Status	Generalize to YES/NO/Unknown	Indirect	Unknown
Date of Last Pap test	Generalize to week and year	Indirect	Total = 813, 858 tests out of 3,764,622 female users
HPV Co-test Ordered	Generalize to week and year	Indirect	Unknown
CT Screen Ordered	Generalize to week and year	Indirect	Users tested = 2,064,109 (# of total tests is similar to GC)
GC Screen Ordered	Generalize to week and year	Indirect	Total tests = 2,238,065
HIV Screen Ordered	Generalize to week and year	Indirect	Total tests = 1, 031,624
Referral Visit Completed Date	Generalize non-HIV referrals to month and year and delete HIV referrals and provide as part of HIV summary separate report.	Indirect	Unknown
Height	For values outside of maximum or minimum values, report at the limit value	Indirect	Unknown
Weight	For values outside of maximum or minimum values, report at the limit value	Indirect	Unknown
Smoking status	Unchanged	Indirect	Unknown

1380

Total number of people in the set (except where otherwise identified) =

Theoretical “bench” analysis: In the absence of other information, we are going to take a cross-product of all the smallest pools and identify the number of people in that pool.

1385 We suspect that the smallest grouping will be caused by the two small race categories, and the date of birth/age category.

**Formula** = smallest pool #/total for that category x smallest pool #/total for that category...

**Total number of users** = 4,129,283 people who have received Title X services

In order: start from the largest group first / sort them in order descending, and note the intermediate results. Note when the pool drops to less than 20 people. (i.e., k=20)

1390 For example, smallest pool within the Ethnicity category = 1,237,652 Hispanic or Latino people = .299746

LEP YES =  $522,294/4,129,283 = .126651$

Ethnicity x LEP YES =  $.03796328 = 156,750$  people (still okay!)

CT screen = .499053

1395 Ethnicity x LEP YES x CT = 0. = 78,260

GC =

HIV =

Age (with under 18s grouped together) =

1400 Race: Since two of the race categories are so small, we need to figure out a way to reduce the risk for that data element. One option is to group those together, and possibly mix both of those into another category. (Currently categories are: 1002-5 American Indian or Alaska Native 2028-9 Asian 2054-5 Black or African American 2076-8 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 2106-3 White). Is it possible to group Hawaiians/Alaskans in with Asians? Is this still useful for reporting needs? There are three options:

- 1405
- Further combine the smaller groups into larger categories
  - Separate reporting to OPA (out of scope for this supplement)
  - Separate de-ID stream/database

1410 Additionally, if Family Planning data will continue to be mapped to regions (based on grouped facility IDs), then the pool for low-occurrence races and ethnicities becomes even smaller, and therefore higher risk. In other words, a Native Hawaiian will be very common and therefore low-risk for re-identification in the state of Hawaii but less so in Alaska, and vice versa.

1415 Based on the bench analysis, the three data elements that are high risk are Race, FPL and Age. For these data elements, what information is really necessary? What information do we need to bring to decision makers to decide what to do? Do we split data streams? Do we accept separate reporting? Etc. Do we redact anyone who fits into the small pool categories? Do we accept the risk?

What if the expense and risk to the data integrity is too high, can we make the database private? I.e., people can request reports, but not access it directly? This imposes a burden on whoever is

1420 managing the database to manage the RBAC or other protections to that database. Is there a way to create a “lighter” database that doesn’t include the risky elements that is more widely available (where race is collapsed to black/white/other) and age is grouped into broader categories, and access to the more specific categories is tightly managed?

1425 Conclusion: Data is not sufficiently de-identified to be low risk and accessible to all grantees and service sites. Other protection methods need to be considered based on what is cost-effective. Access to even the de-identified data set should be limited as strictly as possible and other methods of providing data to the community must be considered, such as:

- pre-planned, aggregate dashboards to provide significant data to the community via a public portal
- 1430 • data-upon-request, provision of deeper statistical data snapshots to individual grantees, sub-recipients, and researchers via research request which is performed by a limited number of OPA-trusted staff with enhanced privacy and security training.