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**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

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Review Process for Student PII Data Requests  
for Research Purposes



- What is student Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?
- Federal and state regulations that guide CDE review of student PII data requests for research
- CDE Research Review Process
  - Research Approval Panel (RAP) Review
  - State Board of Education Review
  - Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)
  - Review Timeframes

# Student Personally Identifiable Information (PII)



“Student Personally Identifiable Information (PII) includes, but is not limited to, information that is collected, maintained, generated, or inferred and that, alone or in combination, personally identifies an individual student or the student's parent(s) or family.

PII, as defined by federal law, also includes other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty; or information requested by a person who the educational agency or institution reasonably believes knows the identity of the student to whom the education record relates.”

[CDE Personally Identifiable Information Protection Policy](#)



- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) affords parents and all students certain rights with respect to education records. These rights extend to students in all grade levels, beginning in preschool and extending through their years in postsecondary institutions.
- FERPA prohibits the release of student record data without parental or student consent with certain exceptions, including exceptions for specific evaluation and research purposes.
- For a summary overview of exceptions, please see this [resource](#) published by the Privacy Technical Assistance Center.
- CDE can not approve any student PII data requests for research unless they align with the FERPA research and evaluation exceptions.

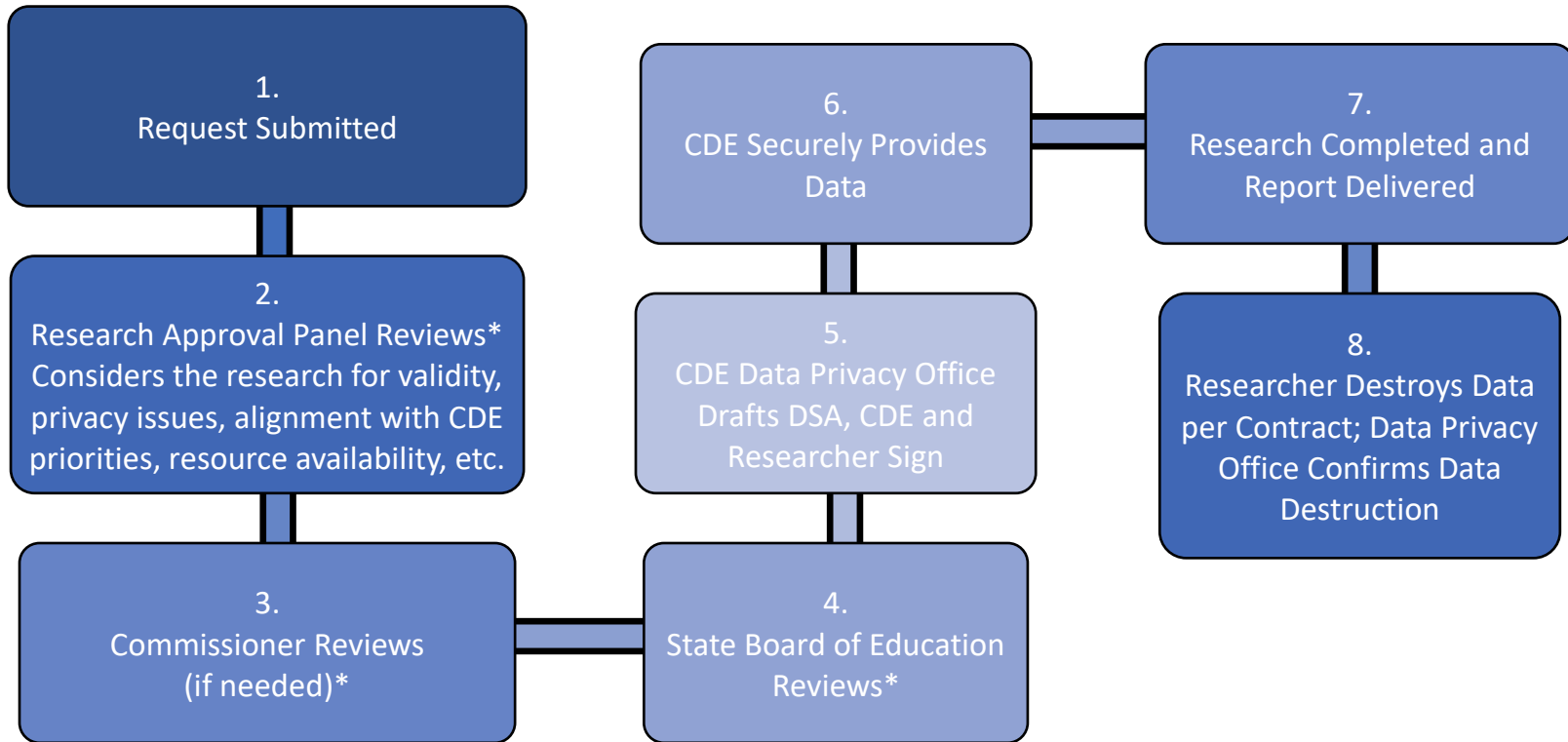
# Colorado Law – The Student Data Transparency and Security Act

- The Student Data Transparency and Security Act (22-16-101 et. al., C.R.S.) states:
  - The Department shall develop a process to consider and review all outside requests for Student Personally Identifiable Information, other than aggregate student information already publicly available, by individuals not employed by the state who seek to conduct research using school system data or Student Personally Identifiable Information already collected by the department.

The process outlined in the remainder of this presentation was approved by the State Board of Education on September 14, 2016, as required by statute.

Data sharing allowable under FERPA's research exception is also allowable under the Student Data Transparency and Security Act.

# CDE Research PII Data Request Review Process



\* If these parties do not approve the research, the process stops and CDE does not move forward.

# Research Approval Panel (RAP) Review



- The Research Approval Panel functions as CDE's primary body for evaluating research requests.
- The RAP will include CDE members from the following areas:
  - Program Experts (familiar with legal requirements for their programs)
  - Policy and/or Legal Analyst (familiar with laws and CDE regulations, and policies)
  - Research Experts (familiar with research methods and practices)
  - Data Owners (responsible for overseeing specific information)
  - Data Privacy
  - Data Security
  - Other employees as needed, e.g., database administrators
  - Outside parties (e.g. parents, community members, researchers) as needed and appropriate.

# Research Approval Panel (RAP) Review



- When the RAP reviews the request, it explores the following topics to determine if the research aligns with CDE priorities and strategies, is in the best interest of Colorado students, and if it is appropriate for CDE to provide the requested data

Is it feasible for CDE to provide the requested data?

Is the research valid and legitimate?

Should the data be redacted or limited?

Is the research of a sensitive nature?

Does the research have benefit to Colorado education? Does it align to CDE's priorities in order to better serve Colorado students?





If a data request is approved by a Research Approval Panel for State Board of Education review:

- The request will be presented to the board during one of its regular monthly public meetings.
  - Researchers should be prepared to present their request via a PowerPoint presentation to the board and answer the board's questions.
  - The request materials will be posted publicly along with the supporting materials for other items on the board's meeting agenda.
  - The board will review the request at one meeting and then vote on the request at a subsequent meeting.



Should the board approve a student PII data request for research:

- CDE will draft a DSA specific to the research request and confirm the final agreement with the requestor.
- The signed DSA will be posted on the CDE website (as required by Colorado law).
- Please see the [sample DSA](#) for an understanding of what security requirements are necessary for the receipt of approved student PII.

# Research Student PII Data Request Review Timeframe



- Be aware that due to the need to extensively review all research requests, it will take time to vet new research requests. Please ensure that you build into your research plan at least 6-12 months to complete this process. CDE strongly recommends requesting approval prior to obtaining grant funding for projects.
- If you have questions about the review process outlined in this presentation, please contact the Data Request Coordinator at [DataRequests@cde.state.co.us](mailto:DataRequests@cde.state.co.us).