



National Dissertation Award for Research on Poverty and Economic Mobility 2024–2025

Application Deadline: March 27, 2024, 11:59 p.m. CST

Informational Webinar: Friday, January 12, 2024, 1:30–2:00 CST

Zoom link: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/94683170209?pwd=Qk8yMlQxb1VLcTNrbTc3cmh3bjl6UT09>

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Posted on November 2, 2023

Revised on January 19, 2024 – Revisions and clarifications in bold and red

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

As the National Research Center on Poverty and Economic Mobility, the [Institute for Research on Poverty \(IRP\)](#) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison invites applications from dissertators using child welfare and Medicaid linked data from the Child and Caregiver Outcomes Using Linked Data (CCOULD) project for its 2024–2025 National Dissertation Award for Research on Poverty and Economic Mobility program. This award is provided with the financial support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Office of Human Services Policy (U.S. DHHS/ASPE/HSP).

The CCOULD project partnered with two states, Kentucky and Florida, to create a linked dataset of state-level child welfare and Medicaid data to facilitate research on child welfare outcomes, child and caregiver Medicaid coverage and services, and health care outcomes. The linked dataset contains information from both child welfare and Medicaid information systems on case demographics, medical diagnoses, services, outcomes, and other relevant information. The linked data may also identify opportunities to improve coordination between the child welfare and Medicaid programs and improve the effectiveness of their services. For more information on the CCOULD project, please review the [lessons learned report](#). The CCOULD dataset is available through the [National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect \(NDACAN\)](#).

The CCOULD dataset was developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families, and RTI International. ASPE's [Office of Human Services Policy \(HSP\)](#) serves as the sponsor for the National Research Center on Poverty and Economic Mobility.

Note that university students are not eligible to obtain the NDACAN data directly as Investigators, but are able to gain access as authorized Research Staff if a faculty member at their institution serves as the Investigator and submits all of the required documentation. Among other steps, the Investigator must obtain a notification from their Institutional Review Board (IRB) that the proposed research project using the Restricted Data was submitted to the IRB and that the IRB (a) found it exempt, or (b) approved it by expedited or full review. Learn more at this website: <https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/datasets/request-restricted-data.cfm>

Research | Training | Policy | Practice

Applications are welcome from dissertators with research projects using the CCOULD dataset. HSP is particularly interested in research focusing on policy implications for child welfare and Medicaid services administered by HHS. Example dissertation topics of interest could fall within, but are not limited to, the following focal areas: indicators of substance use disorders, impact of substance use disorders or mental health conditions on child welfare engagement, impact of child welfare services on child and caregiver outcomes, and health outcomes for children in the child welfare system. However, dissertators may also propose research on additional topics other than those listed.

Competitive dissertation proposals will produce actionable policy research. Research is “policy-relevant” when it informs local, state, or federal law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, or program adoption and implementation in a way that is targeted, timely, and actionable. Policy-relevant research may inform knowledge and understanding of the nature, causes, correlates, and effects of policy issues such as income dynamics, poverty, individual and family functioning, and child well-being with the goal of improving the effectiveness of public policies.

Proposals are welcome from all disciplines and we strongly encourage applications from dissertators who are underrepresented in academia. IRP is using the definition of *underrepresented* as outlined by the [National Institutes of Health](#).

Dissertators who are awarded grants will be asked to participate in a newly formed Research Consortium on Child Welfare Outcomes and Medicaid Utilization and will be asked to consider integrating feedback from IRP and Consortium scholars into their projects and ongoing research.

ABOUT IRP

The Institute for Research on Poverty is a center for interdisciplinary research into the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality in the United States and the impacts of related policies and programs.

As the National Research Center on Poverty and Economic Mobility sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, IRP coordinates the [U.S. Collaborative of Poverty Centers \(CPC\)](#). IRP and its partner centers support and train poverty and economic mobility scholars with a special focus on expanding opportunities for scholars from historically underrepresented groups. In addition, IRP and its partner centers provide relevant, cutting-edge research on a wide range of topics with the goal of improving the effectiveness of public policies to reduce poverty and its consequences.

ABOUT OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION (ASPE), OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES POLICY (HSP)

The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation is the principal advisor to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on policy development. ASPE is responsible for major activities in policy coordination, legislation development, strategic planning, policy research, evaluation, and economic analysis. Within ASPE, the [Office of Human Services Policy \(HSP\)](#) conducts policy research, analysis, evaluation, and coordination on various issues across the Department, including but not limited to, poverty and measurement, marginalized communities, early childhood education and child welfare, family strengthening, economic support for families, and youth development. HSP serves as a

liaison with other agencies on broad economic matters and is the Department's lead on poverty research and analysis. HSP is focused on human services programs and their ability to promote the economic and social well-being of many of America's most marginalized people. Through a variety of programs, services, and benefits administered at the federal, state, local, and community levels, the field of human services provides a range of resources to best support the complex needs of a variety of America's lower-income families and individuals.

To learn more about ASPE and the work they do, please watch [this video](#).

TERMS

Eligibility

Proposals are invited from doctoral students at U.S. universities, other than UW–Madison, whose dissertation uses the CCOULD linked dataset. **Applicants must demonstrate via their Sponsor Letter that they have a faculty member at their institution who is willing to serve as the Investigator to receive the CCOULD data. While applicants do not need to have already completed the steps necessary to access the CCOULD data (including obtaining notification from their IRB board) prior to applying, their dissertation timeline must show that they can complete these tasks prior to the beginning of their award if they are selected. IRP will not release funds until the NDACAN data is approved (this will require an IRB determination).**

We strongly encourage applications from dissertators belonging to groups that are underrepresented in academia and whose dissertation is focused on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and access in human services. IRP is using the definition of *underrepresented* as outlined by the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH). Underrepresentation can exist in various forms, from one's race or ethnicity, to ability status, gender identity or sexual orientation, or current or past economic disadvantage.

Applicants should expect to complete their required coursework by September 2024 and can reasonably expect to complete their Ph.D. by the 2025–2026 academic year or earlier. Applicants need the support of their dissertation chair as documented through a letter of support provided by the dissertation chair as part of the application package.

University of Wisconsin–Madison dissertators are ineligible for funding under this award.

Contract Period

The award contract period is flexible depending on needs of the applicant, but funding must be spent by September 29, 2025. Funding can be used during summer 2024, fall semester 2024, spring semester 2025, summer 2025 or any combination of the preceding times.

Funding

The fellowship provides \$25,000 awarded to a dissertator's home institution to be spent by September 29, 2025. Funding can be used to cover items including tuition, dissertator time and effort compensated via salary and fringe, data acquisition (e.g., data access fees, purchase of data sets, collection of qualitative data, etc.), research assistance, subject payments, travel (for data collection or access or to attend a

research conference), and supplies. Other research expenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis. University indirect costs may also be billed but IRP encourages home institutions to waive this cost.

Budget

Applicants should provide a draft budget narrative outlining when and how they plan to use the \$25,000 in their application materials. Note that home institutions may have restrictions on how the funding is spent and awardees may have to pay taxes on all or part of the funding depending on how it is used. After the award is announced, IRP will work with the awardee and their home institution to develop a detailed budget including determining the amount of indirect costs applied.

Commitment

Receipt of this dissertation award from IRP will require a commitment to:

- Within the **first 6 weeks** of the award begin date, participate via video conferencing in a meeting with IRP to discuss plans for a public-facing project and how to maximize its policy relevance.
- Submit brief quarterly progress reports (≤ 150 words) of work accomplished during the preceding three months **every quarter** in the established award period except for the last two quarters (see timeline for more details), to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu.
- Participate in all Research Consortium on Child Welfare Outcomes and Medicaid Utilization activities throughout the grant period. (Note: specific consortium activities will be outlined in detail at the time awards are announced).
- Submit a draft of the final public-facing project for review and comments to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu **three months before the end of the established award period**.
- **Within two weeks of submitting the draft**, participate via video conferencing in a meeting with IRP to discuss how to maximize its policy relevance.
- Submit a revised final draft by **end of established award period**, to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu.

The public-facing project could be a targeted fact sheet, infographic, brief video, or other formats intended for a wide audience of policymakers. This end project, as well as the quarterly progress reports, will be shared with the ASPE Program Officer. All publications associated with the award should acknowledge the support of IRP and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE).

In addition, the funded dissertator will be invited to attend [quarterly professional development trainings](#) provided virtually. These trainings are developed primarily for in-residence fellows (both post-doctoral Ph.D.s and Masters in Public Administration/Policy graduates) working at HHS through grants from IRP. Additional IRP grantees will also be invited to attend. These sessions are voluntary but will expose the awardee to a broad range of research and methods topics as well as provide the opportunity to engage with a cohort of early-career researchers focused on policy-relevant research on themes tied to poverty and economic development.

Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed in a three-stage process.

1. Applications will be screened for completeness, including:
 - a. Online application completed;
 - b. Application materials uploaded; and
 - c. Letter of sponsorship uploaded.
2. Complete applications will be reviewed by an internal IRP panel to assess whether applicant meets the following eligibility requirements:
 - a. Has a dissertation topic using the CCOULD dataset; and
 - b. Application materials, including letter of support, show that applicant is expected to complete their required coursework by September 2024 and can reasonably expect to complete their Ph.D. by the 2025–2026 academic year or earlier. Letter of support lists a faculty member who commits to serving as the Investigator in the application for NDACAN data so that the applicant can access the CCOULD data set.**
3. Qualifying applications will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished IRP-affiliated scholars and staff. The panels will use the application and letter of recommendation as the basis for scoring the following:
 - a. The potential of the dissertation to advance the field of study in which it is proposed and make an original and significant contribution to knowledge on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and access in human services;
 - b. The quality of the dissertation proposal with regard to its methodology, scope, theoretical framework, and grounding in the relevant scholarly literature (Please note: IRP welcomes applications that challenge scholarly convention);
 - c. The potential for the dissertation to influence the policymaking process, especially related to programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
 - d. The quality of proposed public-facing project;
 - e. The feasibility of the dissertation proposal and the likelihood that the applicant will **be able to access the CCOULD data set, including meeting the NDACAN IRB requirements and** execute the work within the proposed time frame; and
 - f. The applicant’s record of scholarly engagement and potential for scholarly achievement, taking into account the relative advantages and constraints on resources for the proposed project and over the course of the applicant’s doctoral training.

AWARD INFO

IRP anticipates supporting one dissertation research project with a \$25,000 award to be spent by September 29, 2025, provided to the dissertator’s home institution. Award will be made in early June 2024.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Complete applications must include both (1) applicant-provided proposal using the [online Application Form](#); and (2) letter of sponsorship provided by dissertation chair using the [online sponsor submission form](#).

Applicants are responsible for providing the [online sponsor submission form link](#) to their sponsoring dissertation chair and asking their sponsor to directly submit their letter of sponsorship by the application deadline. Both the applicant and the dissertation chair will receive a confirmation e-mail when the letter of sponsorship is submitted. Note that the letter of sponsorship can be completed before or after the application is submitted but both the application and the letter of sponsorship must be completed by the deadline for the application to be considered complete.

1. **Submit proposals via the [online Application Form](#).** Applicants should provide the materials outlined below as one PDF file, in the order listed, by the application deadline. Your application should include:
 - a. Cover page listing the following:
 - i. Dissertator's name, department, university, contact information;
 - ii. Sponsoring dissertation chair's name, department, university, contact information;
 - iii. Project title and abstract; and
 - iv. Anticipated timeline for dissertation completion and defense.
 - b. Description of proposed work, no more than 10 double-spaced pages, to include:
 - i. Research question, original contribution to literature on issues related to child welfare and health;
 - ii. Research design, methodology, and data sources;
 - iii. Anticipated results of research, including potential implications for public policy;
 - iv. Brief description of proposed public-facing project;
 - v. Draft budget narrative outlining when and how \$25,000 will be used; and
 - vi. Current status of dissertation (**including timeline for gaining access to CCOULD data**), preliminary work completed to date, and expected dissertation completion date.
 - c. Current curriculum vitae
2. **Have your dissertation chair submit a letter of sponsorship via the [online sponsor submission form](#).** The letter of sponsorship should address:
 - a. The merits of the dissertation project including its potential to advance the field of study in which it is proposed and make an original and significant contribution to knowledge on issues related to child welfare and health;
 - b. Name of faculty member who will serve as the Investigator in the application with NDACAN to gain access to necessary CCOULD data;**

- c. Expected dissertation completion date; and
- d. The applicant’s record of scholarly engagement and potential for scholarly achievement, taking into account the relative advantages and constraints on resources for the proposed project and over the course of the applicant’s doctoral training.

CONTACT

All inquiries, including questions on the application process, budget, and research issues, should be directed to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu.

TIMELINE

Call Release	November 2, 2023
Optional Webinar	January 12, 2024 from: 2:30–3:00 ET 1:30 - 2:00 CT 12:30–1:00 MT 11:30–12:00 PT Webinar link: https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/94683170209?pwd=Qk8yMlQxb1VLcTNrbTc3cmh3bjl6UT09 Add to Calendar (iCal file)
Application Deadline	March 27, 2024, 11:59 p.m. CST
Notification	Early June 2024
Contract Begins	Flexible depending on proposal
Meeting with IRP	Within the first six weeks of award begin date
Quarterly Progress Reports Due	On the 5th of the month of each quarter during the contract period
Complete Initial Draft of Public-Facing Project	Three months before the end of the established award period
Meeting with IRP	Within two weeks of initial draft submission
Final Public-Facing Project Due	By contract end date
Contract Ends	Flexible depending on proposal no later than September 29, 2025

Note: Award dates and reporting requirement deadlines will be specified in the award letter upon notification.