

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

These FAQs are intended to help Oakland Unite providers respond to common questions that come up when talking to participants about signing the “Voluntary Consent to Use of Personal Data” form.

All providers are required to make their best effort to secure consent from participants enrolled in their Oakland Unite-funded programs. The questions and responses below describe when, how, and why participants' data can be shared if they consent.

These FAQs are not intended for use as a participant hand-out, but as a tool for providers in their conversations with participants.

Providers who have questions about these FAQs or the consent form in general can contact Josie Halpern-Finnerty, Program Planner, at JHalpern-Finnerty@oaklandnet.com

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ: What is Oakland Unite and what does it have to do with me?

Oakland Unite is the name for a unit in the City's Human Services Department. The unit grants out money and works with community-based organizations to support people and neighborhoods most affected by violence. About 3,000 people each year get support from Oakland Unite programs like this one.

FAQ: Why am I being asked to sign this document?

We want to know if our programs are working! Every program that gets funding from Oakland Unite is evaluated to see what's going well and what could be better.

When you sign this document, you are saying it is ok to use information about what you do in this program in the evaluation. The information is used to look at what the program is doing – not what you are doing.

FAQ: What information of mine will be used?

The evaluators will use basic information such as your date of birth, name, age and gender. They will look at information about our work together such as how long you participate and the services you get.

They may also use information from the school district or probation to see if the program is helping things get better in your life. The evaluator will not share your individual information with other people (like probation) or in any of their reports.

FAQ: How will this information be used?

This information will be used in an evaluation that can help you and others.

The evaluator will NEVER share your individual information in reports or presentations – instead, they will combine your information with many other people’s to help programs improve.

For example, they may write a report that says “30% of people served by Oakland Unite programs successfully completed a job training program.”

FAQ: Who will use my information?

The evaluator will use your information along with information from other people who are in Oakland Unite programs. The evaluator is separate from my agency and has many years of experience making sure that people’s information is kept private.

My agency and I will use your information to connect you to services that we discuss.

FAQ: Where is the information stored?

We use a secure, password-protected database designed to protect individual client information (called Cityspan). I also have a paper file that I keep in a locked drawer. You can see your information in the database or file any time you want.

FAQ: Will any member of law enforcement have access to my information?

Law enforcement cannot see your information in the database, and we do not give participant data to any law enforcement agency. Not my agency, not the evaluator, and not Oakland Unite. If you want me to, I can talk to law enforcement about our work together in specific ways that we discuss – for example, if we agree I should call your probation officer to give them an update.

However, it’s true that if my agency was subpoenaed we could be required to share information. I will be very careful about what I enter into the database so that it wouldn’t cause problems for you in the unlikely case that I am required to provide it. You can see what I am putting into the database any time you want.

FAQ: Will my name ever be used? Will my child's name be used?

I'll use your name in the database so that I can keep track of our work together. This also helps the evaluator know whether things have gotten better for people my agency works with – for example, if they graduate high school. The evaluator will NEVER share your name or personal information in reports and presentations.

I will not put your child's name in the database so it will not be shared with anyone.

FAQ: How is the information useful if they don't use my name?

The evaluator helps us and other programs see how things are going overall, not for you personally. For example, they may write a report that says "80% of people served by Oakland Unite programs were not re-arrested after participation."

This helps tell the story of what this program does. In the past, the evaluator has found that programs like ours help people stay out of prison. Knowing that these programs make a difference also helps keep the funding going.

FAQ: If my family and/or I are undocumented, will this put us at risk?

We do not share information with agencies like I.C.E. It's very unlikely we will be required to share this type of information – we would have to be subpoenaed. Just in case, I will be careful not to put information about the status of family members in the database.

FAQ: Do I have to sign this consent?

Simply put: No. Signing the consent form is optional and we can work together either way. But it really helps programs learn how to improve their services to support you and others. And there are a lot of things in place to protect your information.

FAQ: Do you have to put my information in the database?

Yes, at least some basic information about you and our work together has to be entered in the database even if you don't sign the consent form. It's required for our funding, and shows that this program is doing what we said it would. If you don't sign the consent form, it just means that your information won't be included in the evaluation.

FAQ: Can I take back consent? How long does consent last?

Yes, you can take back consent. We can't undo things that have already happened if information of yours has already been included in an evaluation. But we can make sure it isn't used in the future if you change your mind.

Your consent does not have an end-date. I will revisit consent with you if you leave and come back to the program in case anything has changed for you.

FAQ: What are the risks to signing this form?

The risks are small. There is a slight chance that your personal information could be shared in ways it isn't supposed to be, but there are many protections in place to prevent that from happening. It hasn't happened in over eight years of these programs being evaluated.

FAQ: Do you have the form in different languages?

Yes, we have the form in Spanish and Chinese. If you need it in another language just let me know and we can figure out how to get it.

[For forms in Spanish and Chinese visit the Oakland Unite website → Grantee Corner → [Tools for Grantees](#)]