

About This Policy

This document describes NACHC's guiding principles for supporting and collaborating on research. Researchers should recognize that health centers are overburdened by requests to complete surveys or participate in other forms of research. This policy details the circumstances in which NACHC writes letters of support for research-related grant funding, endorses surveys, and/or collaborates in research projects with outside organizations. It is intended to advance collaborative research while also respecting health centers' time and commitments.

Why Collaborate with Health Centers and NACHC

Given their unique patient mix and comprehensive approach to care, health centers offer ideal settings for health services and policy research. They serve traditionally under-researched populations and have well-established relationships with their patients and communities. They also have a record of quality improvement and experience with data collection.

NACHC is committed to fostering the development of new research related to health centers and the medically underserved. To this end, we often write letters of support, endorse research, and partner with academics and others to conduct studies in accordance with our mission. We are able to provide advice, background information, links to potential research partners, and technical assistance. The type of technical assistance varies by case, but often includes research feasibility, approaches for building partnerships with health centers, and how to minimize research burden on centers. We also request researchers working with NACHC to keep us informed of their research interests and activities.

The Benefits of Collaborating with NACHC

NACHC serves as a source of information on health centers, a sounding board for research questions and activities, and a link to health centers and state primary care associations. More than that, the vast network of health centers speeds dissemination of findings and best practices, often reaching other community-based organizations. NACHC sponsors several regular member publications, regularly seeks out and emails health centers grant announcements and research funding opportunities, and has a growing research section on our website. In addition, NACHC hosts two major annual conferences, bringing together approximately 2000 participants representing health center patients, board members and staff, as well as vendors, government representatives, and others. These present excellent opportunities for dissemination, soliciting feedback, and building community partnerships.

NACHC Research Values

NACHC supports research that reflects our research goals and values, as well as health centers' needs. NACHC's mission is "to promote the provision of high quality, comprehensive and affordable health care that is coordinated, culturally and linguistically competent, and community directed for all medically underserved populations." Our research goals, then, are to improve community health and to build community capacity for high-quality primary care. Given these goals and the uniqueness of health center patients, we therefore value research that:

- aligns with our mission and priorities;
- incorporates health centers as equal research partners or is initiated by health centers;
- is sensitive to the traditionally marginalized patients health centers serve;
- protects health centers and their patients from unnecessary research burdens; and
- can be translated into practice across health centers and underserved populations.

Types of Collaborations, Guidelines, and Expectations

NACHC's research interests are broad. We are open to many different types of research collaboration, including study endorsement. Some, but likely not all, are listed below. NACHC's internal Research Collaboration Committee reviews external requests and makes decisions on collaborations. The Committee's review is based on proposal relevancy to health centers and how it is to be operationalized, among other considerations.

Letters of Support for Grant Applications. We ask that letters be requested *at least two weeks* in advance and we also request a study abstract. Providing NACHC with a sample letter is preferred.

Endorsing Surveys of Health Centers. Researchers interested in having NACHC write a survey endorsement letter in order to boost survey response should tap NACHC's expertise in surveying health centers. Feedback from NACHC and/or a small group of our members improves the reliability of the survey instrument. This entails involving NACHC in the early stages of survey and research design. Please submit a request in writing not less than one month prior to any proposal due dates. *Please note that health centers receive numerous requests to complete surveys and NACHC strives to minimize survey burden.*

Joint Research Projects. NACHC welcomes the opportunity to co-conduct research activities, including surveys, focus groups, case studies, data collection and analysis, etc. Researchers should engage NACHC at the design phase of a study or project. A written statement signed by senior investigators or other senior staff should lay out additional expectations from and for both parties, including data sharing requirements, participation in meetings, etc. We expect co-ownership of any newly collected or developed data, as well as acknowledgement in any presentations and publications. Research involving health center *patients* should be approved by an IRB. Please submit a request in writing not less than one month prior to any due dates and Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission.

Additional Expectations

Research involving health center patients must be reviewed by an IRB.

Every collaboration is unique and requires a discussion of expectations for all partners. Some of these are also listed here. For letters of support and study endorsement, NACHC expects the following from collaborating researchers:

- Provide NACHC staff with a one to two page abstract of the study or project.
- Keep NACHC staff posted on research progress.
- Provide NACHC a summary report of findings.
- Be willing to disseminate findings to health centers in the most appropriate manner agreed to with NACHC staff contacts (e.g., write an article for NACHC's *Forum Magazine*, present at a NACHC conference, etc).

Point of Contact and Additional Information About Health Centers

For more information or to pursue a research collaboration and support from NACHC, contact Michelle Proser, Director of Research, at (202) 296-1960 or mproser@nachc.com.

To learn more about health centers, visit www.nachc.com and www.nachc.com/research. For questions on health center statistics and to receive email updates on NACHC research and reports, email research@nachc.com. To stay up to date on policy issues affecting health centers and the underserved, visit www.nachc.com/grassroots-advocacy.cfm.