

Case Study on Privacy

If Ricardo is not responsible for determining allowable access, should he release the names and addresses?

Ricardo should not release the information because it could be considered a breach of confidentiality, because he doesn't have permission to release the information and because it could cause legal issues.

Suppose Ricardo were responsible for determining allowable access to the files. What ethical issues would be involved in his deciding whether to grant access to Beth?

The ethical issues Ricardo would need to consider are related to an individual's right to privacy against the potential scientific benefit. He would have to make sure that he has obtained informed consent, is not abusing his position, hasn't set any precedent and isn't breaking any legal or institutional policies.

Should Beth be allowed to contact the individuals involved? That is, should the Records department release individuals' names to a researcher? What are the ethical issues for the Records department to consider?

The ethical issues the Records department must consider are related the individual's right to privacy, consent, public trust, confidentiality and potential harm before deciding whether or not Beth should be allowed to contact the individuals involved in the study.

Suppose Beth contacts the individuals to ask their permission, and one-third of them respond giving permission, one-third respond denying permission, and one-third do not respond. Beth claims that at least one-half of the individuals are needed to make a valid study. What options are available to Beth?

There are several options available to Beth; she could limit her study to the individuals who gave permission, she could consult an ethical review board for guidance, she could reattempt to contact those who did not respond or she could modify her research design.