

IRB-Lite Decision Memo — ACOE

Date: 2025-09-25

Project Title: Tier-1 Attendance Messaging for Middle Grades

Summary

Purpose: Evaluate whether low-cost Tier-1 text reminders to families reduce chronic absenteeism for 6th–8th grade students across two districts (San Francisco COE and Burbank Unified). Expected benefit: improve attendance and equity outcomes for EL/SPED students.

Data Requested: grain: student-level (de-identified), fields: student_id (hashed), grade, EL_status, SPED_status, attendance_days_present, attendance_days_absent, school_id, year, timeframe: 2024-2025 (Semester 1), suppression_rules: Apply small-N suppression for any subgroup with $n < 10$

Intended Use: research_questions: Do Tier-1 texts reduce chronic absenteeism by ≥ 0.5 percentage points in 90 days?, Are effects larger for English Learners or SPED students?, methods_summary: Difference-in-differences with clustered SEs at school level., publications_and_sharing: Aggregate-only; no PII; pre-publication review by ACOE.

Equity Considerations: benefits: Provide targeted outreach to EL and SPED families; accessible communication., risks: Risk of stigmatization if subgroup status exposed., mitigations: De-identification; suppression rules; bilingual messages.

Review Scores (1–5) & Notes

Minimal risk (privacy & security): 5 ($w=0.25$) — De-identified, encrypted, FERPA aligned
Educational benefit (to ACOE students): 4 ($w=0.25$) — Directly supports attendance improvement

FERPA compliance (lawful basis; PII limits): 5 ($w=0.2$) — Uses FERPA exceptions appropriately

Equity impact (benefits without harm): 4 ($w=0.2$) — Focus on EL/SPED with mitigations in place

Alignment with ACOE strategic goals: 5 ($w=0.1$) — Supports countywide chronic absenteeism reduction

Decision

Decision: APPROVE (Overall score: 4.55)

Conditions (if any): None — minimal risk and aligned with ACOE priorities.

Data Sharing Agreement (MOU) status: Required prior to data transfer.

Retention & Destruction: Data to be destroyed within 90 days after project close.