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CJARS Virtual Data Enclave

Data Documentation Supplement

2025 Q1 Vintage

Purpose Statement

This document is provided as a supplement to the CJARS Data Documentation for prospective or current users of the CJARS Virtual Data Enclave (VDE). It provides essential information needed to understand the VDE data environment, how to gain access, access fees, specific considerations of the version of the CJARS database available on the VDE, services offered, available resources on the VDE, and disclosure review.

1. CJARS VDE Overview

The Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS) Virtual Data Enclave (VDE) is a highly secure, virtualized server where the CJARS database can be used for research and statistical reporting. The CJARS VDE is hosted at the University of Michigan and managed by CJARS project staff. The data environment provides a suite of auxiliary data resources and services to support a wide range of research needs. Additionally, users can bring their own data into the research environment to support their work.

The CJARS VDE was created to provide a mechanism to access the CJARS database for research and statistical reporting. The system was designed to minimize access barriers, while still ensuring that a high level of data security and confidentiality is maintained.

Prospective users interested in learning about the CJARS database should review the CJARS Data Documentation. This document acts as a supplement for users interested in gaining data access through the VDE.

The purpose of this document is help users learn about the VDE data environment, how to gain access, access fees, specific considerations of the version of the CJARS database available on the VDE, services offered, available resources on the VDE, and disclosure review.

2. How to Gain Data Access

Requesting access to the CJARS VDE follows a sequential set of steps. The steps required to gain access are listed below. The Data Access Checklist can be used to track their progress through the data request process.

1. **Step 1: Review VDE Fact Sheet**. Review the "Getting Access" section of the VDE Fact Sheet to learn about requirements to obtain VDE access.
2. **Step 2: Review VDE Fee Schedule**. Refer to Section 3 below for access costs.
3. **Step 3: Fill out Project Proposal Form**. One Project Proposal Form is required per project space. Multi-institution research teams only have to submit one form, but all Principal Investigators and Research Staff must be listed on the form.
4. **Step 4: Submit Access Request Form.** The Access Request Form is used to initiate a data access request. The Project Proposal Form must be attached to this submission.
5. **Step 5: Complete Data Access Forms, Data Security Training, Payment.** After the data access request is submitted, CJARS VDE staff will provide instructions on how to complete access agreements, data security training, and submit payment.
    a. **Step 5a: Review and sign Data Access Agreement.** All projects require a signed Data Access Agreement. Requirements depend on the type of research team. Refer to VDE Fact Sheet for requirements.
    b. **Step 5b: Review and sign Acceptable Use Policy.** All Principal Investigators and Research Staff must sign the Acceptable Use Policy.

c. **Step 5c: Review and sign Confidentiality Pledge.** All Principal Investigators and Research Staff must sign the Confidentiality Pledge.
d. **Step 5d: Review and sign Data Security Plan.** All Principal Investigators and Research Staff must sign the Data Security Plan.
e. **Step 5e: Data security training**. Complete online self-guided data security training. A link to complete data security training module will be emailed after access is requested.
f. **Step 5f: Pay data access fees.** A link to submit payment will be sent after access is requested.

For more information, check out our website, which provides detailed instructions on how to gain access to the VDE: https://cjars.org/vde/getting-access/.

3. Access Fees

Fees are charged to offset the costs of administering and maintaining the CJARS VDE. Fees are based on the status of the Principal Investigator, or Lead Principal Investigator for multi-institution research teams.

The project space cost covers access for 2 active users. Additional users can be added for an extra cost. Each project space is allowed a maximum of 4 active users.

Additional fees will apply for researchers requiring support beyond our standard model (e.g., custom roster integration, significant numbers of disclosed results, etc.). Please email us at cjars-vde-users@umich.edu for more information.

Please note: This fee schedule is subject to change without notice.

Access fees are waived until January 1st, 2026.

CJARS VDE Fee Schedule

Principal Investigator status	Project space cost	Cost for additional researchers
Professional researcher (e.g., faculty)	$1,000 per month ($10,000 annual subscription)	$150 per month ($1,500 annual subscription)
Graduate student-led dissertation research	$250 per month ($2,500 annual subscription)	$100 per month ($1,000 annual subscription)

4. Variation in Coverage

The CJARS database is accessible through two access mechanisms: the Federal Statistical Research Data Center (FSRDC) network and the VDE. The complete CJARS database available in the FSRDC is described in the CJARS Data Documentation. The version of the CJARS database accessed through the VDE excludes data from a few jurisdictions available in the complete version of the database. Exclusions are caused by terms in data use agreements held with data providers that we are actively working towards updating.

The table below lists exclusions from the version of the CJARS database available in the VDE. Prospective VDE users should consider these exclusions in the design of their research projects.

Jurisdictions Excluded from VDE Version of CJARS Database

State	Excluded Event Type(s)
Indiana	adjudication
Michigan	adjudication, incarceration, parole, probation
New Mexico	incarceration, parole, probation
Pennsylvania	incarceration, parole
Rhode Island	incarceration, parole

5. Custom Roster Integration

For users who would like to integrate their own dataset into CJARS, we offer custom roster integration. This integration process matches people in a user's database with people in the CJARS database using identifiable information (e.g., name, date or birth), allowing users to understand involvement in the criminal justice system of individuals in their data. If you are interested in learning more about this option, please reach out to us at cjars-vde-users@umich.edu.

6. Available Resources on VDE

6.1 Auxiliary Data and Standard Code

The CJARS VDE hosts a suite of auxiliary data files. The auxiliary data is available at either the county and/or state levels. The types of statistics that are available in the auxiliary data files are listed below.

- Unemployment rate
- Poverty rates
- Household income
- Educational attainment
- Population size

- Health indicators
- Urbanicity
- Crosswalks
    - County FIPS to county names
    - State FIPS to state names
    - County to commuting zone
- Crime statistics
    - UCR
    - NIBRS (public version)
    - Annual Survey of Jails
    - Census of Jails
    - Annual Probation Survey
    - National Prisoner Statistics Program
    - Survey of Prison Inmates

In addition to auxiliary data, a set of standard code files are available to (1) get researchers accustomed to basic coding functions and (2) create systematic ways of coding, merging, and preparing data for analysis. Examples of standardized code files include applying coverage to filter records, merge event tables, re-code offense types, etc.

6.2 Standard Software

The CJARS VDE is preloaded with software that all users have access to. Software versions get updated periodically, depending on licensing.

If you need additional software to support your project, you can submit a Software Request Form.

- Adobe Acrobat
- Anaconda 3
- Git
- Microsoft Office 2024
    - Access
    - Excel
    - Word
    - PowerPoint
- MiKTeX
- Notepad++
- R and RStudio
- SAS 9.4
- Stata 18 MP-64
- Texmaker

6.3 Computing Resources

Computing resource usage is monitored on the CJARS VDE. Project spaces must be kept under 500 GB in total size. Users must also cap their total RAM usage at 200 GB. CJARS may terminate a user's job if it overruns this limit. If additional RAM is needed, please reach out to us cjars-vde-users@umich.edu to coordinate running a job that requires more than 200 GB during low usage hours (e.g., evenings, a weekend).

7. Disclosure Review

Researchers with VDE access are contractually obligated to protect sensitive information on the VDE. Under no circumstances are CJARS VDE users permitted to remove or transcribe information from the CJARS VDE. Only research output reviewed and approved by CJARS VDE staff can be removed from the data environment. CJARS VDE staff have the sole authority to remove research output from the data environment.

All research output must abide by the requirements described in the CJARS VDE Disclosure Avoidance Handbook. Please review this handbook prior to data analysis.

Researchers must fill out a Disclosure Review Request Form to initiate their review request. Disclosure requests are accepted on an ongoing basis. Notification of approval, denial, or requests for additional information will be sent within 10 business days of form submission.