What is the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) Virtual Research Data Center (VRDC)?

The VRDC is an analytic environment within CMS's Chronic Conditions Warehouse (CCW) where researchers can access and analyze CMS program data. Researchers virtually connect into the VRDC to perform analysis and manipulation of CMS data from their own workstations.

What are the benefits of the VRDC environment?

- Secure environment to analyze beneficiary level data
- No Data Management Plan required
- Timelier and more efficient access to data
- Dedicated workspace that is only accessible to the study team
- Upload capabilities if a user has external files required to conduct their research
- Download capabilities for project summary analysis
- Training assistance and technical help, including:
  - VRDC environment training
  - SAS® Enterprise Guide®
  - Data product training
  - Analytic tool training
  - CCW Help Desk
  - [Frequently asked questions (FAQs)](#)

What analytic tools are available to VRDC users?

Researchers have multiple options for tools that fit their analytic needs.

SAS Only Package
- SAS® Enterprise Guide®

Full CCW VRDC Package
- SAS® Enterprise Guide®
- Databricks: including support for multiple languages like SQL, R, and Python™

Optional Add On
Analytic container including: Stata, RStudio® (R), and Python™

Support Tools for All Users
- Virtual desktop access
- Application Maintenance Schedule
- Secure File Transfer System
- CCW User Dashboard
- Self-Service Account Management
- Internal File Transfer System

Visit https://resdac.org/cms-fee-information-research-identifiable-data to view the VRDC Fee List for additional information.

What data is available in the VRDC?

VRDC users benefit from potential access to CMS data collected and linked at the patient level from more than 35 different CMS sources systems. Data housed in the VRDC includes:
- Medicare and Medicaid administrative claims data
- Beneficiary Enrollment/Eligibility data
- Managed Care Encounter data
- Prescription Drug Event data
- Nursing Home and Home Health Assessment data
- Accountable Care Organization Beneficiary and Provider data

Visit Data Dictionaries to view a full list.

What are the fees to access the VRDC?

The fees associated with accessing CMS data via the VRDC are based on a combination of seat (user) access, project fee, and space/usage cost.

Seat Access

- A standard access fee per user/seat
- Covers CMS onboarding, seat license, security, and other administrative costs
- Charged on an annual basis for each user/seat to continue working on the study

Project Fee

- An annual fee that covers space allocation, Databricks credits, output review and the cost of extracting data
- No charge to add additional years of data

Space/Usage Cost

- An annual space allocation per Data Use Agreement (DUA) is included in the project fee
- Additional space can be purchased in 1 Terabyte blocks
- Databricks usage is measured in "credits"
- An annual Databricks credit allocation per DUA is included in the project fee for the Full VRDC option

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How do I request access to CMS data in the VRDC?

All research requests for CMS data must be submitted through the Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC). ResDAC is a CMS contractor that provides technical assistance with completing and submitting the required data request documentation. ResDAC can be contacted via the following:

Website: www.resdac.org
Email: resdac@umn.edu
Phone: (1-888-973-7322)

Requirements:

- Must be physically present in the United States
- Must connect from an IP address registered for use in the United States
- Must ensure your system is continuously updated to meet CMS security standards
- Must have latest version of Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, or Google Chrome
- Must have a supported version of Windows 10 or newer Windows operating system (MACs are not supported)
- Must have latest version of VMware Horizon Client

How do I connect to the VRDC?

- VRDC access requires a CCW user ID — this process typically takes three to four business days, but it is dependent on the user:
  - Completing identity proofing through Experian
  - Completing annual Security Awareness Training (SAT)
  - Setting up multi-factor authentication (MFA) (self-service tools available for password management)
- Download VMware Horizon Client
- Connect to the VRDC virtual desktop and enter your credentials
- Log in to SAS® Enterprise Guide® — library access typically occurs within two to three business days of CMS notification of an approved DUA and payment confirmation