University of Maryland Baltimore

Human Research Protections Program (HRPP)
Tip of the Month

October 2026

Know Your Data:
Identifiable vs. Coded vs. De-identified vs. Anonymous

Knowing the difference between these data types is important for research compliance and IRB review.

Identifiable

- **Identifiers are included in the dataset.**

Coded

- **Identifiers are replaced with a code, but a separate code key exists that can re-identify individuals.**

De-identified

- **Identifiers were removed or not recorded in the dataset, and no code key exists that can readily link the data back to an individual.**

Anonymous

- **Identifiers were never collected, accessed, or recorded.**

Data Type	Identifiers Present?	Can Be Linked Back to a Person?
Identifiable	Yes	Yes
Coded	No	Yes, via code key
De-identified	No	No
Anonymous	No	No, identity was never known

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