For most research, ensuring participants are not identifiable when results are reported is a key ethical obligation. Excluding direct identifiers (names, addresses, etc.) is a necessary but insufficient step. Deductive disclosure of identity - identifying an individual using known characteristics about them - must be addressed.

Deductive disclosure risk varies depending on study context, information collected about participants, and level of detail or specificity shared with results. Research with a small or unique sample (e.g., persons with a rare disease or unique hobby) or in specific settings (e.g., a school district, workplace, small community) is particularly prone to deductive disclosure risk - basic demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc. is enough to identify persons in some settings.

Researchers must carefully assess deductive disclosure potential given the specific context of the study, and design effective methods to protect participant confidentiality. General tips include, but are not limited to the following:

- Report aggregated study results that describe groups instead of individuals. Avoid reporting information for outliers/very small groups if doing so risks deductive disclosure (e.g., if there is only one individual in the sample/population with certain characteristics).
- Ensure results do not include obvious identifiers (names, addresses, images, dates of birth, etc.).
- Avoid identifying the specific research setting or location - use generic descriptors and avoid geographic/location details (e.g., state/region instead of city).
- Use generic or broad descriptors for personal characteristics (e.g., administrator instead of principal).
- Present demographic or background information using ranges or broad groupings - avoid sharing specific, detailed, or unique demographic or background information.
- Recode to collapse outlying values into categories with sufficient numbers of cases.

The IRB recognizes that confidentiality is not feasible or desirable in some research. Identifying participants in published results, either directly or indirectly, is generally acceptable if:

- disclosure of identity does not present significant risk to participants or third parties, and
- participants are informed their identity will or may be disclosed when results are shared, and they prospectively agree to these plans.