



Security Assessment Report and Attestation Guideline

(Formerly Information Security Assessment
Supplemental Guidance for External Entities)

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1 Purpose

This document supplements Texas Health and Human Services' (hereafter referred to as HHS) [Information Security Controls \(IS-Controls\)](#), specifically the following requirements as they apply to external entities:

- CA-02 Security Assessments
- CA-06 Security Authorization
- CA-07 Independent Assessment

This document meets state requirements in [Title 1, Part 10, Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\), Chapter 202, Rule §202.24](#), in the Agency Information Security Program. These requirements include protections based on risk for all information and information resources, including resources outsourced to an external entity.

2 Scope

This document affects external entities responsible for complying with the aforementioned HHS information security requirements and HHS employees who are responsible for monitoring external entity compliance.

3 Definitions

Term	Definition
External Entity	Individuals or organizations external to HHS who have an existing or potential contracting relationship that permits the individual or organization to access, create, disclose, receive, transmit, maintain, or store HHS data.
Independent Assessments	Independent assessments can be obtained from elements within organizations or can be contracted to public or private sector entities outside of organizations.

Term	Definition
Independent Assessor	Independent assessors or assessment teams are individuals or groups who conduct impartial assessments of organizational information systems. Impartiality implies that assessors are free from any perceived or actual conflicts of interest with regard to the development, operation, or management of the organizational information systems under assessment or to the determination of security control effectiveness. To achieve impartiality, assessors should not: (i) create a mutual or conflicting interest with the organizations where the assessments are being conducted; (ii) assess their own work; (iii) act as management or employees of the organizations they are serving; or (iv) place themselves in positions of advocacy for the organizations acquiring their services.

4 Guidance

4.1 Authority to Receive HHS Data

Before an external entity receives HHS data, the external entity must comply with HHS information security requirements as documented in the contractual agreement between the external entity and HHS, and must be authorized to receive data in accordance with [IS-Controls CA-06, Security Authorization](#).

To be granted the authority to connect or authority to operate, the external entity must comply with [Section 4.2](#) Complying with HHS Information Security Requirements.

4.2 Complying with HHS Information Security Requirements

[Table 1: Security Compliance Requirements](#), is an embodiment of [IS-Controls CA-02, Security Assessments](#).¹ An external entity’s compliance requirements vary depending on the types of HHS data that it accesses, creates, discloses, receives, transmits, maintains, or stores.

Table 1: Security Compliance Requirements

Security Control Baseline or Overlay ²	Required Documents	Frequency	Mandated by IS-Controls
Low or Low Plus ³	Security Assessment Report	Biennial (only submit upon request)	CA-02
Moderate	Security Assessment Report by an Independent Assessor	Biennial	CA-02, CA-02(01)
High	Security Assessment Report by an Independent Assessor	Annual	CA-02, CA-02(01)
IRS, CMS-MARS-E, or CJIS	Security Assessment Report by an Independent Assessor	Annual	CA-02, CA-02(01)

¹ However, an external entity’s contractual agreement with HHS may provide more restrictive compliance requirements.

² Refer to IS-Controls section 2.1 for a full explanation of all security control baselines and overlays.

³ HHS requires external entities who must comply with the “low” or “low plus” security baselines to complete a Security Assessment Report on a biennial basis. However, external entities are not required to submit the required documentation to HHS unless otherwise stipulated in the contractual agreement, or unless requested by HHS. If HHS requests the required documentation, the external entity must submit it within 90 days of the request.

4.2.1 Security Assessment Report

The external entity must complete a [Security Assessment Report](#) as proof of compliance with HHS information security requirements. In order for HHS to accept the Security Assessment Report, the external entity must do the following:

1. Submit the Security Assessment Report using the HHS [template](#).
2. Attest that the external entity is compliant with all HHS information security controls required per the external entity's contractual agreement with HHS.

4.2.2 Moderate and High Security Control Baseline Additional Requirements

An independent assessment must validate that the external entity meets security compliance requirements. "Independent assessment" is defined in the definition section of this document and described in [IS-Controls CA-02\(01\)](#), Independent Assessors supplemental guidance.

4.2.3 Regulatory or Federal Overlays Additional Requirements

The external entity may receive some data from HHS that originates from another regulatory or federal source that has additional assessment requirements beyond what is mentioned above. The external entity must refer to its contractual agreement with HHS for any added requirements.

4.2.4 Reporting Non-Compliance with HHS Requirements

External entities must submit additional documentation to HHS for each documented instance of non-compliance with HHS information security requirements.

External entities must submit one of the following applicable forms for each instance of non-compliance to document how they will address the reported non-compliance.

4.2.4.1 Plan of Action and Milestone (POA&M) Form

The external entity must complete a separate [Plan of Action and Milestone \(POA&M\) Form](#) for each non-compliant information security control that will be remediated. The external entity must use this form to explain how and when they will become compliant and should include timelines and a remediation plan.

4.2.4.2 Risk Exception Request Form

If the external entity cannot remediate the risk posed by their non-compliance, the external entity must complete a [Risk Exception Request Form](#) for each non-compliant information security control that cannot be remediated. The external entity must use the form to explain why they cannot comply with information security requirements and include alternative solutions to reduce the risk posed by the non-compliance.

4.3 How to Submit Documentation

All information security documentation concerning HHS data is classified as confidential. The external entity must send this documentation in a manner compliant with IS-Controls SC-08, Transmission of Confidential Data, and IS-Controls SC-28, Protection of Data at Rest. The external entity should contact the HHS point-of-contact identified in the contractual agreement for further guidance on how to securely submit the documents to HHS.

The external entity must submit a Security Assessment Report, along with any of the following document(s) if applicable:

- POA&M forms
- Risk Exception Request Forms
- Any other required security documentation identified in the contractual agreement

HHS reserves the right to request additional information from the external entity to confirm that the applicable information security requirements are in place.

Failure by the external entity to comply with information security requirements may result in consequences including, but not limited to, liquidated damages, contract termination, regulatory fines, or other remedies.

5 Guidance Documents

The following documents are associated with this guidance.

5.1 Federal and State Laws

5.1.1 Title 1, Part 10, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 202, Rule §202.24

Establishes requirements that each agency shall develop, document, and implement an agency-wide information security program that includes protections, based on risk, for all information and information resources.

[Link](#)

5.1.2 Information Security Controls (IS-Controls)

Includes safeguards or countermeasures that, when implemented and enforced, satisfy the information security compliance requirements defined in applicable federal and state laws, executive orders, directives, policies, HHS regulations, and standards.

[Link](#)

6 Revision History

Date	Change	Department Owner
03/03/2021	Document renamed and issued as Security Assessment Report & Attestation Guideline	Chief Information Security Office
06/17/2019	Revised and replaced IS-RAMP	Chief Information Security Office
08/31/2015	Issued as IS-RAMP	Chief Information Security Office