

FCRA/FCDS Guide to Hiring Professional Contractors for Cancer Reporting in Florida

Introduction

This guide helps healthcare facilities evaluate and hire contracting service providers or independent contract abstractors for cancer case reporting in Florida. It outlines best practices to ensure providers meet the Florida Cancer Data System (FCDS) reporting requirements and maintain high data quality standards. Note: Neither the Florida Cancer Registrar Association (FCRA) nor the FCDS endorses or approves contractors working in Florida.

Background

Cancer reporting to the FCDS is a legislatively mandated statewide cancer surveillance program overseen by the Florida Department of Health. Over 350 hospitals and various other reporting sources, including radiation therapy centers, surgery centers, pathology laboratories, and oncology offices, contribute about 280,000 case abstracts each year. Some facilities do not have dedicated cancer registry staff and may depend on contractors or service providers for reporting and backlog management. Currently, Florida has over 25 contract service providers and several independent abstractors.

Contractor Qualifications

- All abstractors must pass the annual FCDS abstractor skill assessment.
- Oncology Data Specialist (ODS) credential (formerly CTR) is the entry-level standard.
- Experience is a critical factor when evaluating contractor qualifications.
- For additional guidance, refer to the NCRA Best Practice Guide for Outsourcing Cancer Registry Services. Visit the NCRA website at <https://www.ncra-usa.org/Advocacy/Workforce/Workforce-Resources-and-Research>.

Key Considerations for Hiring

Define Your Goals

- Backlog Catch-Up
- Transitional Staffing for New Accredited Programs
- Long-Term or Permanent Staffing

- Full Cancer Program Management

Identify Potential Contractors

- Industry contacts
- Referrals from other facilities
- NCRA or FCRA directories

Evaluation Criteria

Individual Abstractors

- ODS credentials and years of experience
- Prior work with Florida registries
- Understanding of Florida-specific reporting rules
- FCDS abstractor code status

Agencies

- Scope of services (casefinding, abstracting, submission, quality control)
- Client references and success stories
- Data quality and abstract review procedures
- Timeline to start and staffing availability

Onboarding & Responsibilities

Pre-Onboarding

- Verify FCDS abstractor code
- Review of Florida reporting deadlines and procedures
- Execute HIPAA Business Associate Agreements (BAAs)
- Review IT security requirements

Define Responsibilities

Area	Responsible Party
Casefinding	Facility / Contractor
Abstracting	Contractor
Data Submission (FCDS/NCDB)	Facility / Contractor
Accreditation Prep	Facility / Contractor
Quality Control & Audits	Facility / Contractor

Facility and Case Type Considerations

Facility Types

- Networked Hospitals
- Individual Hospitals (Adult/Pediatric)
- Ambulatory Surgery Centers
- Free-Standing Radiation Treatment Centers
- Private Physician Group Practices

Case Complexity

- Primary Care: Routine cases (diagnosis, surgery, referral)
- Secondary Care: Specialized treatment centers
- Tertiary Care: End-of-life care, complex clinical trials
- Pediatrics: Specialized child oncology

Abstracting Requirements

Abstract Types

- CoC-Compliant Abstracts: Requires proprietary software, AJCC staging, SSDIs
- FCDS Incidence Abstracts: Minimum data set

Additional Tasks

- Case review for non-reportable cases
- Active and passive follow-up
- Quality-of-care data collection (e.g., ASCO QOPI, CMS OCM/ROM)

Contractor Types

- Corporate Pooled Registry Services
- Corporate CoC-Accredited Program Management
- Independent Abstractors (Per Diem/FTE)
- Interim Abstracting Services

Technology & Software

- Software Used
 - Specify name and version
- Remote vs. Onsite setup
- Secure email and data transmission
- FCDS IDEA System:
 - Incidence Abstracts- Single Entry Module
 - Dermatology Module

- Private Physician Office Module
- Access Needs:
 - Multiple EMRs
 - Secure VPN
 - Multi-Factor Authentication

Cost and Budgeting

Estimate costs in the following areas:

- Service Area
- Administrative Fees
- Casefinding
- Abstracting – CoC Full Abstract
- Abstracting – Incidence Only Case Using FCDS Single Entry Module or other software product
- Abstract Corrections/Modifications
- Non-Reportable Case Reviews
- Audit Support

Compliance and Accreditation Responsibilities

Ensure contractor understands:

- Florida reporting laws and timelines
- National accreditation standards (CoC, NAPBC, NAPRC)
- FAPTP and CMS reporting models

Checklist Before Finalizing Hire

- Review contractor credentials and FCDS testing requirements
- Confirm familiarity with FCDS specific requirements
- Secure references and confirm past performance
- Set clear responsibilities, expectations, and timelines
- Finalize access, software setup, and HIPAA BAA
- Confirm cost structure and scope of services
- Establish a single point of contact for communication

Key Acronyms

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC)

Business Associate Agreement (BAA)

Commission on Cancer (CoC)

Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

Florida Cancer Data System (FCDS)

Florida Cancer Registrars Association (FCRA)

Florida Association of Pediatric Tumor Programs (FAPTP)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC)

National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC)

National Cancer Data Base (NCDB)

National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA)

Oncology Data Specialists (ODS)

Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI)

Site Specific Data Items (SSDI)