

As requested in our phone conference, I am providing you with the following information.

Attached is an adobe acrobat presentation that was discussed on a conference call (3/30/07) on Probabilistic Record Linkage by the National Association of Health Data Organizations. This explains Link Plus, which is a probabilistic or deterministic method of linking data developed at CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control in support of CDC's National Program of Cancer Registries. It is a Microsoft Windows-based application. This is free software and will be available in June. You might be able to use the Beta version now. The last screen of the attached presentation has the following:

1. Go to NPCR Home Page: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/npcr>
2. In the 'Tools' Section click on Registry Plus
3. Under 'Registry Plus Components' click on Link Plus
4. Under 'On this page' click on Installing and Upgrading Link Plus

The method that our agency developed about 10 years ago is similar in theory. We block the data to decrease the number of records to compare. (Sex and two parts of the birth date must equal before comparison.) Then we assign weights or points for each match or partial match using name, birth date, and social security number. When the total of the weights reaches a threshold, it is considered a match. The weights can be different depending on the population. Our weights should probably be updated. Our weights were developed for our Mental Health agency which had a lot of adults. When using it for Medicaid, there are more children. Since social security numbers are now required very quickly after a child is born, children with similar birthdates are more likely to have similar social security numbers. Adults with similar birthdates are not as likely to have similar social security numbers. Our weights for children are too high for partial matching of social security numbers. We need to update our weights to reflect this. We are considering using Link Plus, mentioned above, instead of updating our system. A more technical description of our matching program is attached for those interested.

I hope this helps someone.

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