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Chronic Conditions Warehouse Virtual Research Data Center

Accessing Limited Data Set (LDS) Files Using the Secure File Transfer System (SFTS)

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Revision Log

Date	Changed by	Revisions	Version
February 2026	K. Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Added section on CCW VRDC download account creation	1.2
July 2025	K. Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Added table of contents and onboarding sectionClarified file retention policy	1.1
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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide instructions for downloading and decrypting Limited Data Set (LDS) files in the Chronic Conditions Warehouse's (CCW) Virtual Research Data Center (VRDC) Secure File Transfer System (SFTS).

1.1 Process Overview

1. Setting up a CCW VRDC download account and receiving an email from CCW with decryption password when data is available for download.
2. Accessing the CCW SFTS through an Internet browser — Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Microsoft Edge (latest version recommended).
3. Downloading your self-decrypting archive (SDA) executable files to a local Windows system.
4. Running each SDA executable file, entering decryption password when prompted.

2.0 How to Set Up Your CCW VRDC Download Account

Prerequisites: The following must be completed before the CCW VRDC download account can be initiated:

1. LDS Data Use Agreement (DUA) has been approved.
2. LDS specification worksheet is complete — all download users must be listed on the DUA and must reside in the United States (refer to the [Non-US-Based Researcher Policy](#)).
3. Payment confirmation is provided to FilesforOrder@cms.hhs.gov.

2.1 Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Check the User's Email

- Look for an email from ccwhelp@ccwdata.org containing an invite link and instructions for CCW VRDC access
- **Important:** Users can only use this secure link once and the link becomes invalid after 20 days

Step 2: Complete the User Information

- Click the invite link to navigate to the “New User Request – User Information” page
- Read and agree to the CCW User Agreement by checking the box
- Fill out the User Information and CCW Profile sections

Step 3: Enter Contact Information

- Complete all required fields on the “New User Request – Contact Information” page

Step 4: Review and Submit

- Double-check all information for accuracy; submit your request
- Contact the CCW Help Desk at ccwhelp@ccwdata.org if information is incorrect

Step 5: Experian Identity Verification Process (Required for Federal Systems)

- Read and agree to terms and conditions on the “New User Request – Identity Verification” page
- Enter all required personal information
- Submit your Identity Verification form

Step 6: Receive the Identity Verification Results

- If Experian validates your identity, you will receive a CCW registration confirmation email
- If Experian cannot validate your identification, contact CCW Help Desk at ccwhelp@ccwdata.org to complete the manual Identity Verification Process

Step 7: Required Security Training

- Once you have completed the Identity Verification Process, you will receive an email with instructions to complete CCW Security Training
- Complete the required Security Awareness Training and email a copy of the certificate to ccwhelp@ccwdata.org

Step 8: Receive Account Credentials

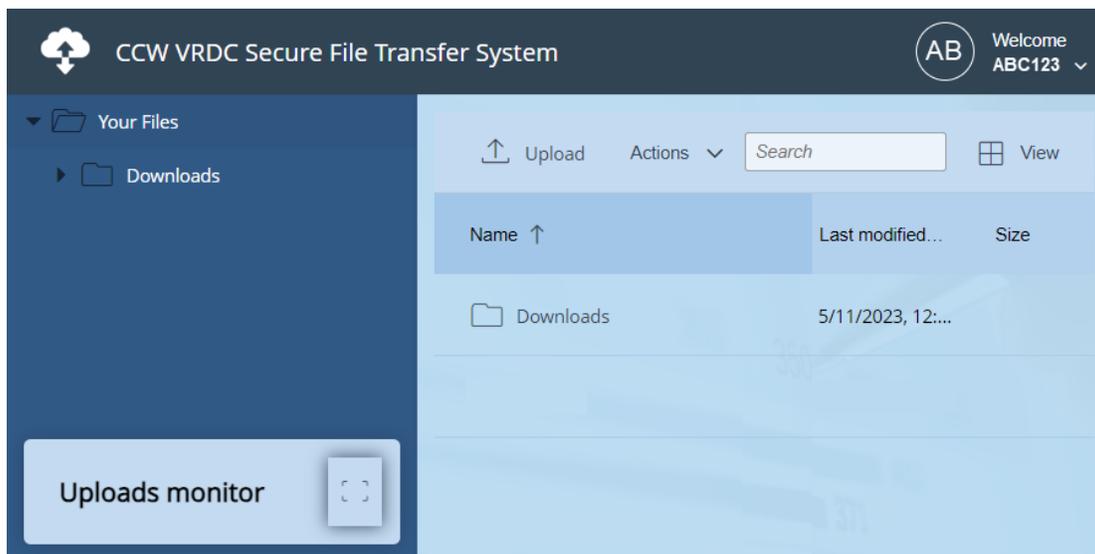
- Once the Security Training has been received, you will receive an email from CCW Help Desk with the CCW User ID and login instructions
- You will also receive a second, separate email with a temporary CCW password
- You will be required to change your password when logging in for the first time
- Both the email with the CCW user ID and the email with the temporary CCW password will include links to the *CCW Okta Factor Enrollment and Management Guide* needed to complete step 9

Step 9. Set Up Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

- Refer to the [CCW Okta Factor Enrollment and Management Guide](#) to complete MFA setup

3.0 Accessing the CCW SFTS

Upon receiving a delivery notification email from the CCW team, enter <https://sfts.ccwdata.org> in your local desktop browser's address bar. Once logged in, the SFTS home page displays:



4.0 Downloading Files

Within SFTS, locate your files in the left navigation pane by selecting **Downloads > LDS > DUA_##### > REQ_LDS_#####**, YYYY folder (where DUA_##### is your DUA number and REQ_LDS_##### is your request number the system provided in the password email).

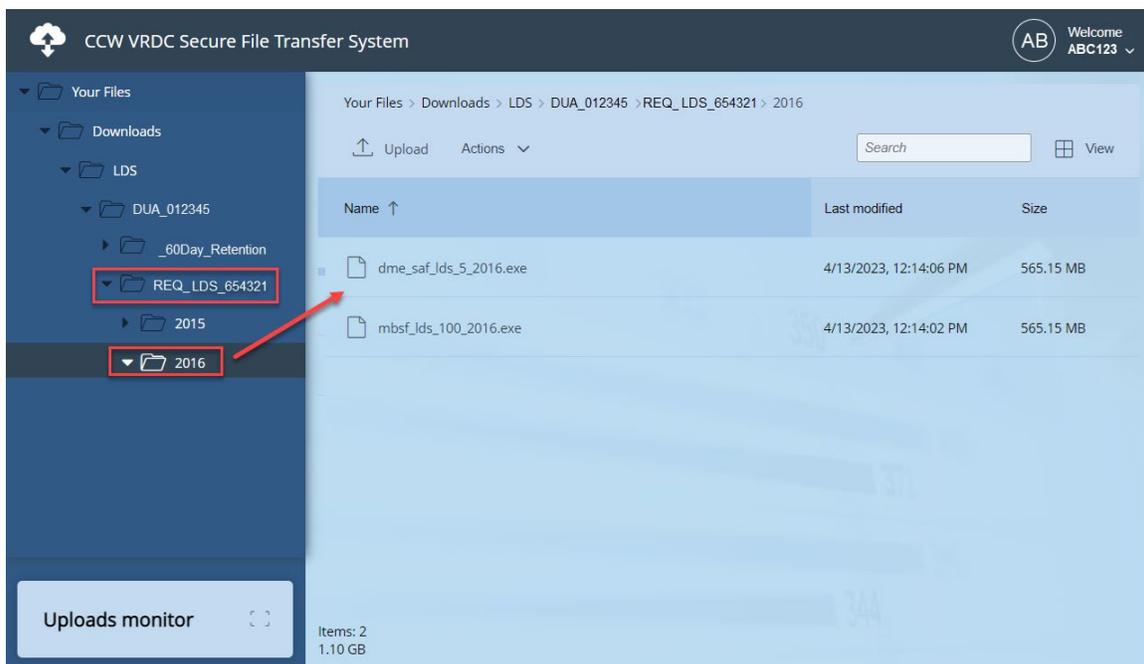
Download the SDA executable files with one of the following methods:

Option 1 — hover over the filename to display a link. Select the link to start the download. Depending on the browser used:

- a. The file downloads to your computer in the default **Downloads** folder
- b. A **Save As** option displays allowing you to save the file to a specific location on your computer
 - You should ensure that the location selected has adequate space to expand the compressed SDA files

Option 2 — right-click on the file and select **Download**.

To download multiple files, use either the **CTRL** or the **Shift** key to select multiple rows. Select the **Actions** dropdown menu and select **Download**.



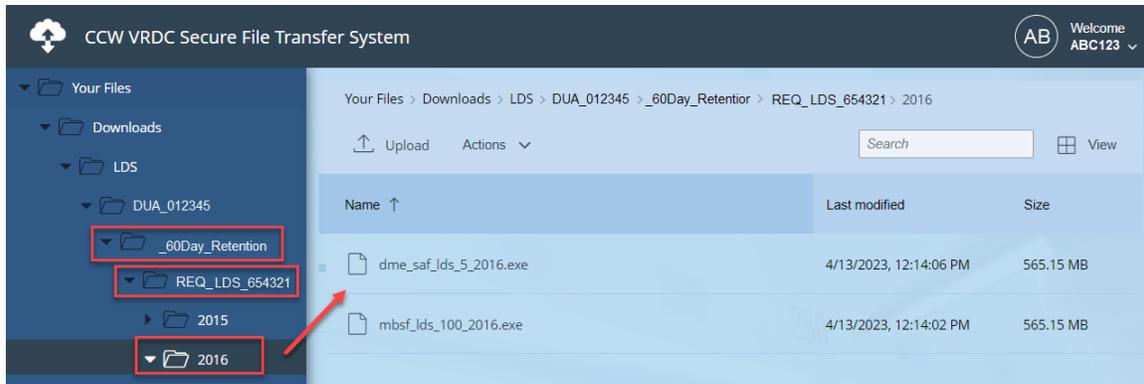
5.0 Running the Executable Files

Double click on each executable file previously downloaded. When prompted, enter the decryption password provided in the password email.

6.0 File Retention in SFTS

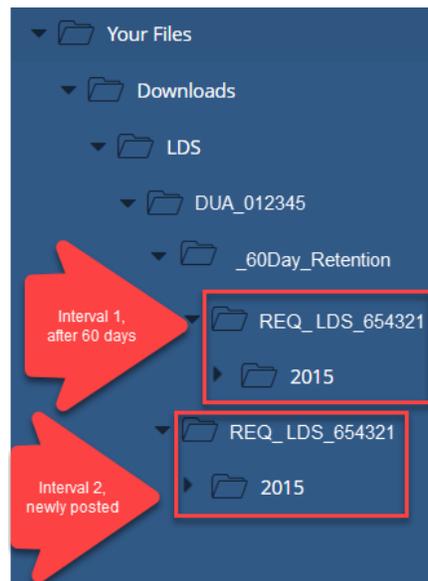
Files within the SFTS are available for a total of 90 days. For the first 30 days, files reside in the primary Downloads > LDS > DUA_##### > REQ_LDS_#####, YYYY folder.

After 30 days, the system automatically moves the request files under the _60Day_Retention folder (within a REQ_LDS_##### folder), then deletes them at the end of the additional 60 days. Data must be downloaded and any issues with the data reported within 90 days. Otherwise, 50% of the original fee will be assessed to reload the data to the CCW.



The 90-day file retention window, for each individual file, starts when the file was made available within the SFTS, not when the user first accesses the data.

Different files (within a single request/REQ_LDS_#####) can exist in both the original request folder and under the _60Day_Retention folder at the same time.



7.0 SFTS User Guide

For more details about using the SFTS to access and download files, please refer to the File Downloads section of the [Secure File Transfer System \(SFTS\) User Guide](#). You must enter your CCW user ID and password to access this guide.

8.0 Where to Get Assistance

The CCW Help Desk provides assistance between 8:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday through Friday (excluding most federal holidays). Contact the CCW Help Desk at ccwhelp@ccwdata.org or 1-866-766-1915.