

# **National community services data dictionary**

**Version 4**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is Australia's national health and welfare statistics and information agency. The Institute's mission is *better health and wellbeing for Australians through better health and welfare statistics and information.*

# **National community services data dictionary Version 4**

**National Community Services Data Committee**

**2006**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

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# Foreword

This fourth version of the *National community services data dictionary* is an important component of Australia's data development infrastructure for community services. In particular, the expanded array of agreed data standards in this new version will further increase our national capacity to establish common definitions and data elements across community services data collections and with the health and housing assistance sectors.

The use of standardised data elements helps to achieve consistency in data and facilitates comparability in and across collections, which is vital for policy, planning and research purposes. With consistent, comparable data, more meaningful analysis can be carried out at the national level, assisting governments to plan and deliver quality services and to meet public accountability requirements. The use of common data elements also allows more holistic analysis in relation to social issues that stretch across program boundaries, for example disability services, mental health and community care.

The dictionary provides a common basis for the collection of data by jurisdictions throughout Australia. This consistency and comparability means that the information they gather can be widely used in community discussion and public policy debate on community service issues.

The dictionary's value extends beyond national requirements. People involved in local or jurisdictional community services data development may also use its templates and practices to maintain consistency with national collections and to help establish internal consistency within their own data collections.

This dictionary is produced under the auspices of signatories to the National Community Services Information Agreement. As such, it represents substantial contributions of time by a wide range of recognised experts in the field. Their contribution is gratefully acknowledged. The building of national data standards helps to ensure that the extensive and costly collection of data on the use of community services produces information that is internally consistent and comparable across the sector.

You will find that the format of the data elements in version 4 of the dictionary is different from that of previous versions. All metadata in this version are based on the 2003 edition (this is the latest edition) of the international standard ISO/IEC 11179:2003. This edition of the international standard provides a more rigorous approach to the development of data definitions, thereby ensuring greater uniformity and less ambiguity. Our implementation of this standard can be found in METeOR, the web-based metadata registry for storing national data standards used by the health, housing and community services sectors. Version 4 of the dictionary presents data standards in a user-friendly and less technical format than that in METeOR.

I urge all collectors of community services data in Australia and those involved in developing standards and collections to use the dictionary and so contribute to improving the quality of information available in this field.

Gul Izmur  
Chair  
National Community Services  
Information Management Group

Penny Allbon  
Director  
Australian Institute  
of Health and Welfare



# What is the *National community services data dictionary*?

The *National community services data dictionary* is the authoritative source of national community services data definitions.

In essence, the aim is to provide a 'common language' for the various agencies and organisations involved in community services.

The dictionary is a reference on nationally agreed data definitions and information on standards relevant to the community services sector.

The dictionary is an important resource for people involved in building data collections and conducting research and evaluation activities.

## How to use the *data dictionary*?

For most data elements the dictionary provides generic definitions and value (data) domains (that is, code sets and/or classifications) that are applicable across all areas of community services. As a result, the level of detail may not be specific enough for individual data collections and the value domains may be too broad. In these cases, data collectors are encouraged to develop their own specific subcategories within the broader categories in the dictionary. This means that data can still be mapped to the value domains set out in the dictionary and will be comparable with other collections at a broad level.

In addition, individual collections can use a combination of data elements from the dictionary to collect information for their own specific purposes. For example, it may be important to collect information about a carer's age, sex and indigenous status. Although there are no specific data items called 'Carer's age', 'Carer's sex', or 'Carer's indigenous status', there are definitions for 'Informal carer', and data domains for 'Age', 'Sex' and 'Indigenous status' that can be combined to provide appropriate data items for collection.

## Why use the *data dictionary*?

Using the dictionary will improve data comparability and consistency across and within data collections.

## Compatibility with other standards

The data standards outlined in the dictionary are compiled by the National Community Services Data Committee (NCSDC) and endorsed by its parent committee, the National Community Services Information Management Group (NCSIMG). These committees are committed to using standards adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other authoritative sources wherever possible.

Decisions to include items in the dictionary are made on the basis of:

- comparability and consistency with other relevant data standards
- appropriateness of the information to the community services sector

- ability of the item to provide relevant information about population, client and service profiles
- ability of the item to produce high-quality data and be consistently applied
- effort required to collect the data weighed against the benefits
- ability of the data items to meet statistical and ethical standards.

Data definitions are presented in a format based on the second edition of the international standard for defining data elements (ISO/IEC 11179) issued by the International Organization for Standardization.<sup>1</sup> This format is also used in the *National health data dictionary* and the *National housing assistance data dictionary*.

Where possible, data standards in the dictionary are consistent with other national standard classifications to ensure overall comparability of national data. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is the source of many key socioeconomic classifications used in community services data collections, for example, Australian Standard Classification of Languages, Australian Standard Geographic Classification and the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations.

## Governance

The *National community services data dictionary* is an initiative under the National Community Services Information Agreement, auspiced by the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council.

Under the agreement, all parties:

- cooperate in the development of a national community services data dictionary that sets out agreed data definitions, classifications and standards and which will be the authoritative source of national community services data definitions.
- comply with and use the agreed definitions and standards for data collected for the purpose of national information collections

## Objectives

The data dictionary aims to describe in standardised form:

- data commonly applicable in the community services sector, for which a reasonable degree of consistency of measurement exists
- data important across the community services sector that currently lack standardisation
- 'good practice' items, such as certain Australian Bureau of Statistics standards, which have potential for use in data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> ISO/IEC 11179-3:2003(E), *Information technology – metadata registries (MDR) – registry metamodel and basic attributes*. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization.

## Where do you get the dictionary?

The current version of the *National community services data dictionary* is Version 4 .

Printed copies of the dictionary are available from the:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

Phone: (02) 6244 1000

Fax: (02) 6244 1255

An electronic version can be downloaded as a PDF file from:

[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hwi/ncsddv4/ncsddv4.pdf](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hwi/ncsddv4/ncsddv4.pdf)

Definitions can be queried in the AIHW's online metadata registry at:

[meteor.aihw.gov.au](http://meteor.aihw.gov.au)

## Feedback and contact details

The development of the data dictionary is an ongoing process. The support and professional input of a range of community services data development groups are essential to expand its scope and utility.

The NCSDC welcomes feedback on existing data standards in the data dictionary and submissions (either for new data items, modifications to existing items, or information on your data development activities). NCSDC member details are included in the dictionary.

Further information may be found on the AIHW website at:

[www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsdc/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsdc/)

or from:

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The compilation of version 4 of the National Community Services Data Dictionary has been greatly assisted by funds provided by the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council and the AIHW. Although the compilation of the dictionary is the responsibility of the NCSDC, the National Community Services Information Management Group played an important role by providing broad direction and support throughout its preparation.

A number of organisations assisted the NCSDC by making valuable contributions of staff time and expertise to the development of the dictionary. These include the organisations who have members on the NCSDC (see Appendix 4).

# Abbreviations and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASCED	Australian Standard Classifications of Education
ASCCSS	Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics
ASCL	Australian Standard Classification of Languages
ASCO	Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
ASCRG	Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
CSTDA	Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement
DNCB	Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit
DSS	Data Set Specification
HACC	Home and Community Care Program
ICD-10-AM	International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modification
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MDS	Minimum Data Set
METeOR	The AIHW's metadata electronic, online repository
NCCS (V2)	National Classifications of Community Services (Version 2)
NCSDC	National Community Services Data Committee
NCSIA	National Community Services Information Agreement
NCSIMG	National Community Services Information Management Group
NHDC	National Health Data Committee
NHDD	National Health Data Dictionary
NHIMG	National Health Information Management Group
NLI	National Localities Index
NMDS	National Minimum Data Set
PAF	Postal Address File
PDPID	Postal Delivery Point Identifier
RRMA	Rural, Remote Area and Metropolitan Area
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SACC	Standard Australian Classification of Countries
SLA	Statistical Local Area
WHO	World Health Organization