



Informed consent

Informed consent—what is it and why is it necessary?

Informed consent is a statement by a client that he or she agrees to have personal information recorded and sent to the National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) for analysis.

Consent is a requirement of the SAAP National Data Collection – this is specified in the Collection’s protocols. It helps to promote individual client rights and is consistent with the prevailing views about the ethics of data collection.

New information clients need to know

As of 1 July 2005, the introduction of a new SAAP Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) will enable SAAP data to be linked with data collections for community and health services (see Information Sheet 2). This does not change the principles of informed consent outlined above, or the confidentiality or security of personal information in the National Data Collection. However, you will need to inform your clients of this development when seeking their consent to record personal information. This includes clients who were ongoing on 30 June 2005 that had already provided their consent.

Gaining informed consent

So that clients can make an informed decision about whether they will participate in the collection you need to tell them:

- the reasons for the collection and how the data will be used, including linking between data collections.
- that their completed data form will be sent to the NDCA, an independent organisation, for processing
- that this information does not contain their name – instead, an alpha code is used; and
- that reports contain only combined information from many clients and will not identify an individual.

It is very important that you assure people

- that they will not be identified
- that their information will only be used for statistical purposes. It will not be used for any legal, administrative or other purposes.
- that they will not be discriminated against if they decide not to give their consent
- that they can consent to participate in the data collection overall but not have particular personal information recorded.

THREE REASONS TO GIVE CLIENTS ABOUT WHY THE NDCA NEEDS INFORMATION

1. That it will help you (the agency) to understand more about the client and what s/he wants and needs from the service.
2. That their information, in combination with the information from other clients of your agency, will help you to plan and improve your services.
3. That their information, in combination with information from other clients around Australia, will give governments the data they need to make good decisions about services for people who are homeless or in crisis.

For more information about gaining informed consent, please refer to the July 2005 SAAP NDCA Collectors manual