

5 Recent NMDS development and future directions

The IGCD has supported the continued development of the NMDS for alcohol and other drug treatment services throughout 2000. The AIHW has maintained a coordinating role in the project, undertaking data development work as well as highlighting national and jurisdictional implementation issues. The AIHW also produced the publication *Guidelines for the National Minimum Data Set for Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services* (AIHW 2000c) to provide information about the collection process and the data elements that comprise the data set.

5.1 Data development in 2000

The IGCD and the IGCD NMDS Working Group have identified a need to collect data elements that provide information on the treatment types accessed by clients, the settings in which these treatments are being delivered, and the frequency with which clients have contact with the treatment providers. This information will allow trends in treatment patterns to be monitored, which is of fundamental importance to planning effective treatment delivery.

It has also been identified that more useful information will be captured by the data set if 'treatment episodes' are reported, instead of the registration-based collection that is in place for the 2000–01 collection period. The Working Group noted that the use of treatment episodes reflects clinical practice within the alcohol and other drug treatment sector. The inclusion of a treatment episode concept at the national level will enhance the quality of information on service utilisation. The proposed concept is similar to that of 'episode of care' used in the admitted patient care NMDS, with episodes being defined around different 'treatment' or 'care' types.

The NMDS for alcohol and other drug treatment services currently includes a date of commencement of treatment, however there is no reporting of the date of cessation of treatment. The inclusion of a data element that records the date on which treatment ceases, will allow the concept of 'treatment episodes' to be introduced to the NMDS.

In September 2000, the IGCD NMDS Working Group agreed to propose that the NMDS for alcohol and other drug treatment services be expanded to include the following new data elements and data element concepts:

- main treatment type for alcohol and other drugs
- other treatment type for alcohol and other drugs
- treatment delivery setting for alcohol and other drugs
- reason for cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs
- date of cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs
- number of contacts within a treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs
- cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs (concept)
- service contact (concept)

- treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs (concept).

All jurisdictions have indicated their support for the inclusion and development of the above data elements, but agreement to collect additional items for the 2001–02 period is subject to the availability of resources and systems development. It was recommended to the National Health Data Committee (NHDC) that the changes to the NMDS be endorsed, but to note that not all jurisdictions may be able to commit to the collection until some time after

1 July 2001.

The NHDC considered this submission at their meeting held on 5/6 October 2000 and raised a number of issues and recommendations for the IGCD NMDS Working Group to consider before endorsing the changes to be submitted to the National Health Information Management Group (NHIMG). The IGCD NMDS Working Group resolved these issues at a teleconference held on 18 October 2000. A re-submission with revised drafts of the data elements and data concepts was made to the NHDC for consideration at a teleconference held on 26 October 2000. The NHDC agreed on the inclusion of the additional data elements and concepts and agreed to the change in statistical units of the NMDS, and recommended these changes for endorsement by the NHIMG.

The NHIMG endorsed the recommendations at a meeting held 9–10 November 2000 with the condition that a phased uptake of the revised NMDS be adopted with commencement from 1 July 2001 and all jurisdictions complying by July 2002.

5.1.1 Proposed content of the NMDS beyond July 2001

Table 5.1 presents the agreed NMDS for alcohol and other drug treatment services for mandatory collection by States and Territories by 1 July 2002. The pre-existing data elements (as published in the *National Health Data Dictionary Version 9.0*) and those data elements that will be new additions to the NMDS are indicated in Table 5.1. The full details of the new data elements are provided in Appendix E.

5.2 Future directions

Further development of the NMDS for alcohol and other drug treatment services will be ongoing during 2001–02 and directed by requirements of the IGCD, in consultation with States and Territories and the AIHW. Development will include making amendments to existing data elements and formulating new data elements for inclusion. Development on existing data elements includes refining definitions, data domains, and the directions provided in the relevant data element entries in the *National Health Data Dictionary* as stakeholders identify problems. The emphasis will be on having:

- clear, consistent and appropriate definitions;
- clear, consistent and adequate data domains; and
- clear, consistent and adequate instructions to guide in the collection and use of NMDS data.

Development on potential data elements will be conducted with the aim of increasing both the quantity and quality of the data collected by the NMDS.

Table 5.1: The National Minimum Data Set—alcohol and other drug treatment services, showing data elements that are agreed for collection by States and Territories by 1 July 2002.

Data Element	New to NMDS	NHDD code
Establishment-level data elements		
Establishment identifier (comprised of)		000050
— State identifier		000380
— Establishment sector		000379
— Region code		000378
— Establishment number		000377
Establishment type		000327
Geographic location of establishment		000260
Client-level data elements		
Client type		000426
Country of birth		000035
Date of birth		000036
Date of cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000424
Date of commencement of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs		000430
Establishment identifier		000050
Indigenous status		000001
Injecting drug use		000432
Main treatment type for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000639
Method of use of principal drug of concern		000433
Number of service contacts within a treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000641
Other drugs of concern		000442
Other treatment type for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000642
Person identifier		000127
Preferred language		000132
Principal drug of concern		000443
Reason for cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000423
Sex		000149
Source of referral to alcohol and other drug treatment services		000444
Treatment delivery setting for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000646
Supporting data element concepts		
Cessation of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000422
Commencement of treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs		000427
Service contact	✓	000401
Treatment episode for alcohol and other drugs	✓	000647