



NOPSAD Validata unit record file – Order of variables

Introduction

The National Opioid Pharmacotherapy Statistics Annual Data (NOPSAD) Collection Validata unit record file – *order of variables*, is a guide for those involved in collecting and transmitting data for the 2026 NOPSAD collection period. The Department of Health and Aged Care provides funding for this collection.

This document provides a summary from the *NOPSAD 2026 Collection Data Guide (specifications) for unit record data*. It should be used to supplement, not replace the specifications in the data guide.

This Validata unit record file guide provides summarised information on the NOPSAD collection, such as:

- a national timetable for data transfer for the 2026 NOPSAD collection
- jurisdiction Validata [unit record file structure](#), data quality checks and transfer process
- frequency reports available from the 2026 NOPSAD Validata system.

State and territory NOPSAD data requirements

National timetable for transfer, validation and reporting of 2026 data

Year 2026	Who	What
September	AIHW	AIHW roll out 2026 Validata tool
September/ October	AIHW	AIHW invite jurisdictions to submit 2026 initial NOPSAD data
October/November	Jurisdictions	Jurisdictions to submit clean data through the Validata tool
1 December	Jurisdictions	Sign off final data
2 December	AIHW	Approve and finalise all jurisdiction data submissions.

File content

Each data supplier should submit the following unit record files in CSV format via the Validata tool.

File name	Unit record file must contain	Number of variables	Additional info
Client file	Pharmacotherapy client based unit record information for all specified data items – for a snapshot day in 2026.	9 variables (columns)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see Table 2 • Please ensure column descriptors are included
Prescriber file	Pharmacotherapy prescriber based unit record information for all specified data items – for a snapshot day in 2026.	4 variables (columns)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see Table 3 • Please ensure column descriptors are included
Dosing point site file	Pharmacotherapy dosing point based unit record information for all specified data items – for a snapshot day in 2026.	4 variables (columns)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see Table 4 • Please include column descriptors

File format

Data submissions for the 2026 collection period will require jurisdictions to load their unit record data into the AIHW Validata tool as a **.CSV** file.

<p>Creating a Comma Separated Value (.csv) format</p> <p>To turn an excel file into a .csv file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> click the 'save as' option name your file as normal select '.csv' from the 'save as type' drop down menu. <p>CSV is the only compatible format for the Validata load system.</p>	<p>It is highly recommended the following features in excel be removed before saving a file as .csv:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coloured cells or text Freeze panes/filters Drop down option list Column headings that span more than one line Any other 'fancy' styles or features Remove all data columns not specified in the collection manual.
<p>Preferred format for <u>unit record data</u> submission loading to Validata:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the NOPSAD unit record (Excel) template has been set up with an option to use drop down menus providing text options in place of codes for data entry, such as Male/Female/Other instead of codes 1, 2, 3. in addition to the text option, a separate tab in the excel sheet has been created to automatically convert the text to the relevant code required for the data to load in .CSV format onto the Validata system. the Validata tool is designed for coded data to be uploaded directly rather than text; if your jurisdiction has the capability to extract coded values in place of text this will streamline the loading onto the Validata system. if your jurisdiction has a large amount of data to upload to the Validata tool and it requires conversion from text to code, please contact the AIHW for further advice. 	

General quality checks for state/territory data

Jurisdictions should perform the following quality checks before data are loaded into the NOPSAD Validata system. More detailed validation checks according to each data element are listed in tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1: General quality checks for jurisdictions and service providers

Quality check	Process
Missing data	Jurisdictions should investigate missing data to ensure all NOPSAD data items are reported. A reasonable attempt should be made to resolve missing data issues, at both aggregate and unit record level.
Incorrect codes	Jurisdictions should ensure that the correct codes are entered for all data items. This may involve mapping codes from raw data before sending data to the AIHW. Coding errors that cannot be corrected should be coded to the appropriate default value (e.g. inadequately described/not stated). Alpha characters should be removed and replaced with numerical values where appropriate.
Duplicate records	<p>Jurisdictions should check for duplicate unit records. When records are identified as possible duplicates, jurisdictions are to ensure that unit records have not been mistakenly submitted on more than one occasion.</p> <p>The following data items are used by AIHW to check for duplicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – client identifier – Dosing point site – Pharmacotherapy drug type – age in years – Prescriber type – Opioid drug of dependence – client status
Range checks	Range checks are used to ensure that values entered for each data element are within a valid numeric range. For example, responses to the data element 'Prescriber type' should only be coded within the range of 1–6 or as 9. A response that does not fall within this range including zero ('0') is an error and should be left blank.



Quality check	Process
Logic checks	Logic checks are used to ensure internal consistency between responses within individual unit records. For example, records where Prescriber was coded = 4 (Correctional facility) but Dosing point does not equal = 4 (Correctional facility) and may be another location like hospital/pharmacy – this will be identified as requiring further information or correction.
File format	All files will fail to load if they are not provided or converted to CSV format, for loading into the AIHW Validata load system. CSV is the required file format.
Data element load order	The required order of the data items for the NOPSAD client, prescriber and dosing point unit record files is outlined in tables 2, 3 and 4. The data file <u>will fail to load if the order is incorrect.</u>

NOPSAD Validata unit record file structure

Jurisdictions must submit CSV. unit record data files. Each data file must contain the specified number of data items (listed in tables below) in the correct order to load successfully. The following tables present the correct file structures:

- Table 2—Client unit record file
- Table 3—Prescriber unit record file
- Table 4—Dosing point site unit record file

Table 2: Client unit record file – Order of data items

Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
1	Pharmacotherapy Client identifier	Pharmacotherapy client identifier is a unique identifier for the pharmacotherapy client used for data editing and analysis. Jurisdictions may use their own alphabetic, numeric or alphanumeric coding systems.	Format 'Unspecified' Jurisdiction specified range. The client identifier can be created by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two or three character jurisdictional name abbreviation followed by C for client followed by a unique number. • For states with two character abbreviation, the third character should be 1. • For example, a unique client identifier for NSW = NSW1C1, or WA = WA1C1. • The pharmacotherapy client identifier must be unique to each client for that collection year. 	Not permitted
2	Pharmacotherapy drug type- Client	The type of pharmacotherapy drug that the client has been prescribed. This data item refers to the pharmacotherapy drug that a client was authorised to receive or received on the snapshot day.	Format 'N' <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Methadone 2 Buprenorphine 3 Buprenorphine-naloxone 4 Buprenorphine LAI 	Not permitted

Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
3	Pharmacotherapy prescriber type - Client	The sector (public or private) in which the prescriber is practising when prescribing pharmacotherapy drugs.	Format 'N' 1 Public prescriber 2 Private prescriber 3 Public/private prescriber 4 Correctional facilities	Not permitted
4	Pharmacotherapy dosing point site type - Client	The dosing point at which the client was provided with pharmacotherapy medication in the context of client level data. This data item refers to the type of physical setting in which the pharmacotherapy drug was provided to a client, regardless of whether the dose was administered on site or taken away.	Format 'N' 1 Public clinic 2 Private clinic 3 Pharmacy 4 Correctional facilities 5 Hospital 6 Other 9 Not stated	9
5	Person Sex*	The term 'sex' refers to the biological differences between males and females, as represented by a code. *New code 'Another term' 3: refers to persons who have mixed or non-binary biological characteristics (if known), or a non-binary sex assigned at birth. The value meaning of 'Another term' has replaced 'Intersex or indeterminate'. Terms such as 'indeterminate', 'intersex', 'non-binary', and 'unspecified' are variously used to describe the 'Another term' category of sex. The label 'Another term' is used because a more descriptive term has not been widely agreed within the general community.	Format 'N' 1 Male 2 Female 3 Another term* 9 Not stated The value meaning of "Another term" has been assigned to Code 3 replacing "Other" and "Intersex or indeterminate" in previous versions of this data item. The third option recognises that across Australian jurisdictions and elsewhere there are a range of terms used.	9
6	Age in years	The age of the client in years as at 30 June 2026. This data item is asking for the age group that the client fits into as at 30 June of the collection year, not the age or date of birth of the client. This is a derived data item based on the client's date of birth. The age of the client should be updated and translated into an age group each year.	Format 'NNN' Where the age is <u>not stated</u> the <u>default 101</u> should be used. The classification for the client's age corresponds to their age in years. For example, 0 should be used for a client aged less than 1. The age group 1 would be assigned for a client aged one year, the age group 2 for a client aged 2 years and so on for clients up to 99 years. For a client aged 100 years and over the classification age group would be 100.	Not permitted



Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
7	Indigenous status	Whether a person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, as represented by a code.	Format 'N' 1 Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin 2 Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin 3 Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin 4 Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin 9 Not stated	9
8	Opioid drug of dependence	The opioid drug that led to a client receiving pharmacotherapy treatment for their opioid dependence. Only the most recent opioid drug of dependence should be reported. Therefore, only codes in the range 1100–1399 should be used.	Format 'NNNN' Valid range of opioid drug codes from 1100 to 1399 ASCDC (see classification below). Including codes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0000 - Inadequately described • 0001 – Not stated • 0005 – Opioid analgesics, n.f.d. A numeric 4-digit ABS code from the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern (ABS cat. no. 1248.0, version 2011) .	Not permitted
9	Client Status	An indicator of whether a client has entered or left pharmacotherapy treatment in the jurisdiction since the previous snapshot day. This data item refers to whether or not a client has entered or left pharmacotherapy treatment in a particular jurisdiction since the previous snapshot day (that is, in the previous 12 months).	Format 'N' 1 New 2 Readmission 3 Interstate transfer 4 Ongoing 9 Not stated	9

Table 3: Prescriber unit record File - Order of data items

Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
1	Pharmacotherapy prescriber identifier	A prescriber identifier is a unique identifier for the pharmacotherapy prescriber used for data editing and analysis. It is the responsibility of each jurisdiction's health authority to assign a unique prescriber identifier to each prescriber.	Format 'NN[X]NNNNN' Jurisdiction specified range. The client identifier can be created by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two or three character jurisdictional name abbreviation followed by P for prescriber followed by a unique number. • For states with a two character abbreviation, the third character should be 1. • For example, a unique prescriber identifier for NSW could be NSWP1, or for WA the identifier could be WA1P1. • The pharmacotherapy prescriber identifier must be unique to each prescriber for that collection year. 	Not permitted

Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
2	Pharmacotherapy drug type - Prescriber	The type of pharmacotherapy drug(s) that the prescriber is authorised to prescribe on the snapshot day. If the prescriber is authorised to prescribe more than one drug type this should be coded as 'more than one type of drug'.	Format 'N' 1 Methadone only 2 Buprenorphine only 3 Buprenorphine-naloxone only 4 More than one type of drug	Not permitted
3	Pharmacotherapy Prescriber type	The sector in which the prescriber is practising when prescribing pharmacotherapy drugs. This refers to prescribers who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> held an authority to prescribe and a had a client who was receiving treatment on the snapshot day (for NSW, SA, ACT and NT) held an authority to prescribe and had a client who was receiving treatment during the month of June (WA and Tas) held an authority to prescribe and had a client who was receiving treatment during the collection year (for ACT) held an authority to prescribe whether or not they prescribed during the collection year (for Vic and Qld). 	Format 'N' 1 Public prescriber 2 Private prescriber 3 Public/private prescriber 4 Correctional facilities	Not permitted
4	Number of clients per prescriber	Total number of pharmacotherapy clients receiving pharmacotherapy treatment on a snapshot day per pharmacotherapy prescriber identifier.	Format 'N' 11 – 0 Clients 1 – 1-5 Clients 2 – 6-10 Clients 3 – 11-15 Clients 4 – 16-20 Clients 5 – 21-25 Clients 6 – 26-50 Clients 7 – 51-100 Clients 8 – 101+ Clients	Not permitted



Table 4: Dosing Point site unit record file - order of data items

Item no.	Data item	Metadata definition	Cell content	'Not stated' response
1	Pharmacotherapy dosing point site identifier	A unique identifier for the dosing point site used for data editing and analysis.	Format 'NNX[X]NNNNN' Jurisdiction specified range. The dosing point site identifier should be created in the following manner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two or three character jurisdictional name abbreviation followed by D for dosing point followed by a unique number. For states with a two character abbreviation, the third character should be 1. For example, a unique dosing point site identifier for NSW could be NSW1, or for WA the identifier could be WA1D1. The dosing point site identifier must be unique to each dosing point site for that collection year. 	Not permitted
2	Dosing point site type	The dosing point at which the client was provided with pharmacotherapy medication in the context of the type of dosing point in the context of dosing point level data. This data item refers to the type of physical setting in which the pharmacotherapy drug was provided to a client, regardless of whether the dose was administered on site or taken away.	Format 'N' 1 Public clinic 2 Private clinic 3 Pharmacy 4 Correctional facilities 5 Hospital 6 Other 9 Not stated	9
3	Pharmacotherapy dosing point site locality - Statistical area level 2 (SA2)	The location of the dosing point at the ASGS SA level 2. Geographical location of a site from which a health/community service is delivered, as represented by a code. The location of each pharmacotherapy dosing site where clients receive their pharmacotherapy drug during the collection year.	Format 'NNNNNNNNN' 9-digit valid code as defined in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 (ABS 2021). Indicates the statistical local area of the service delivery outlet within a reporting state or territory	Not permitted
4	Number of clients per dosing point site	Total number of pharmacotherapy clients receiving pharmacotherapy treatment on a snapshot day per pharmacotherapy dosing point site identifier.	Format 'N' 11 – 0 Clients 1 – 1-5 Clients 2 – 6-10 Clients 3 – 11-20 Clients 4 – 21-50 Clients 5 – 51-85 Clients 6 – 86-100 Clients 7 – 101+ Clients	Not permitted

NOPSAD Validata reports for data submitters

Frequency reports

On completion of the validation checks, the Validata tool produces frequency counts for the majority of variables for each jurisdiction's data set (see Table 5). Frequency tables are used to check that frequency distributions are sensible, and that AIHW totals match those of the jurisdictions. The AIHW will consult with the relevant jurisdiction to resolve any differences.

Table 5: Frequency tables for jurisdiction data sets

Data element	Output labels
Client identifier	List of Client identifiers
Prescriber identifier	List of Prescriber identifiers
Dosing point site identifier	List of Dosing point site identifiers
Prescriber type	List of totals for Public prescriber, Private prescriber, Public/private prescriber, Correctional facilities
Dosing point site	List of totals for Public clinic, Private clinic, Pharmacy, Correctional facility, Hospital. Other, Not Stated
Pharmactherapy drug type	List of totals for Methadone, Buprenorphine, Buprenorphine-naloxone, Buprenorphine LAI
Sex	List of totals for Male, Female, Another term, Not stated/inadequately described.
Age in years	List of totals grouped by single year of age from 1–100.
Indigenous status	List of totals for Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander, Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Not stated/ Inadequately described
Client Status	List of totals for New, Readmission, Interstate transfer, Ongoing, Not stated
Number of Clients	List of totals grouped by 0 Clients, 1–5 Clients, 6–10 Clients, 11–15 Clients, 16–20 Clients, 21–25 Clients, 26–50 Clients, 51–100 Clients, 101+ Clients
Statistical Area Level 2	List of Statistical Area Level 2 values
Opioid drug of dependence	List of grouped values for opioid drug of dependence from the numeric 4-digit codes from the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern (ABS cat. no. 1248.0, version 2011) .

Please email the AOD@aihw.gov.au inbox with any further queries about NOPSAD processing or data submissions.