



Carer Experience of Service

Data specifications

Carer Experience of Service data supplied under the National Best Endeavours Data Set (CES NBEDS)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the layout and format of CES NBEDS data files to be submitted by states and territories to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The scope of the [Carer Experience of Service National Best Endeavours Data Set](#) (CES NBEDS) is state and territory public sector [Specialised mental health services](#).

Specialised mental health services are those with a primary function to provide treatment, rehabilitation or community support targeted towards people with a mental disorder or psychiatric disability. These activities are delivered from a service or facility that is readily identifiable as both 'specialised' and 'serving a mental health care function'.

The definition excludes specialist drug and alcohol services and services for people with intellectual disabilities, except where they are specifically established to assist people affected by a mental disorder who also have drug and alcohol related disorders or intellectual disability.

The CES NBEDS contains metadata describing 27 questions included in the CES survey, which explore the experience of service by people in the three months prior to the survey completion. Each survey question can be found in the DSS specific information for the relevant data element. The NBEDS also includes a number of demographic, service and contextual data elements. Free text fields that are part of the survey are not included.

Timelines and queries

Jurisdictions are requested to submit a compliant file for 2024–25 data— that is, data collected via the CES survey between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025— via email to mentalhealth@aihw.gov.au by **30 September 2025**.

If you have any queries in relation to the data specifications or the supply of the data, please contact Elise Kennedy (elise.kennedy@aihw.gov.au) or Jason Thomson (jason.thomson@aihw.gov.au).

File type and naming convention

DAT files should be a single Fixed Format data file, with each record in the file being terminated with Carriage Return (CR) and Line Feed (LF) characters.

The data file will have the naming convention of CESSSSYYYYNNNNN.DAT where:

- CES denotes 'Carer experience of service'
- SSS is the abbreviation for the state/territory name, using the following convention:

NSW: New South Wales

VIC: Victoria

QLD: Queensland

WAU: Western Australia

SAU: South Australia

TAS: Tasmania

ACT: Australian Capital Territory

NTE: Northern Territory

- YYYY indicates the reporting year covered in the file, using the convention where financial years are abbreviated by referring to the last calendar year of the pair (for example, 2024–25 is identified as 2025)
- NNNNN represents an incremental batch number (leading zeros present).

Data Integrity

Metadata format values and their associated meanings:

Value	Valid character range
N	Numeric character set. The number of times the N appears in the title of the data element is the required length (e.g., NN denotes a required length of 2 numeric values).
X	Alphanumeric character set: contains alphabetic and numeric characters, and may contain blank characters. The number of times the X appears in the title in the data element is the required length.
()	The character preceding the round brackets (parentheses) is repeated the number of times specified (e.g. X(9) indicates 9 alphanumeric characters).
[]	The string within the square brackets is optional in any ordered combination (e.g. [XXX] indicates 0, 1, 2 or 3 alphanumeric characters (i.e. blank, X, XX or XXX)). Characters next to, but not included in the square brackets, show the minimum required length. (e.g. X[XXX] indicates 1,2,3 or 4 alphanumeric characters, it cannot be left blank)

The data elements are either mandatory or conditional in the data set specification. Missing data are indicated differently for each of these data elements.

For **mandatory data elements**, cases of missing data (that is, unknown, not stated or not available):

- For **Number fields**, the data should be reported as 7 (Not applicable) or 9 (Not stated/inadequately described), using leading zeros when necessary to pad out the field to the required length. The principle here is that all numeric fields require a valid value. The NBEDS metadata specifies permissible and supplementary values for each data element.
- Survey items where the respondent has selected a 'Don't know' or 'Not needed' response are not classified as missing data, and the corresponding permissible value for the data element should be entered according to the metadata.
- For **String fields**, the data should be filled to the minimum required length (see above metadata format table). For single string fields, such as Person—Gender, where a 'missing/not stated' value has been specified for a particular data element (for example, '9' has been specified for missing data), use the stated value for 'missing/not stated' rather than simply space filling.
- Values in **Number fields** must be zero-filled and right-justified. These should consist only of the permissible and supplementary numerals 1 to 9.
- Values in **String fields** must be left justified and space-filled. These should consist of any of the printable ASCII character set (that is, excluding control codes such as newline, bell and linefeed).

For **conditional data elements**:

- Data should be reported as 'Not applicable' when the condition is not met and the conditional data elements are not applicable.
- Values in **Number fields** must be zero-filled and right-justified to pad out the field to the required length.
- Values in **String fields** must be left justified and space-filled to pad out the field to the required length.

Service provider entity

The reporting of service entities aims to create consistency between the mental health NMDSs, and where possible, the National Outcomes and Casemix Collection (NOCC), Local Hospital Networks/Public Hospital Establishments (LHN/PHE) NMDS and Admitted Patient Care (APC) NMDS.

The service provider entities in the CES NBEDS utilise the same structure as is used for the Mental Health Establishment NMDS and are the:

- specialised mental health components of the state and territory health authorities, and of regions within states and territories;
- specialised mental health service organisations;
- hospitals or service unit clusters;
- service units; and
- specialised mental health services provided by private hospitals, and non-government residential service units in receipt of state or territory government funding.

In general, states and territories determine the organisational units that will report as *regions*, *organisations*, and *service units*.

State or territory

This level refers to the state or territory and should be reported using the *State/Territory identifier* data element.

Region

The region refers to an administrative concept not a geographical one. States and territories may have one or more regions into which the state or territory is divided and to which its mental health service organisations belong. Region would be reported using the *Region identifier* (RegId) data element. In the smaller states or in the territories there may only be one or no region. In these cases, the *Region identifier* is to be reported as '00' and the *Region name* (RegName) would repeat the name of the state or territory.

Organisation

An organisation may consist of one or more service units based in different locations and providing services in the admitted patient, residential and ambulatory settings. For example, a mental health service organisation may consist of several hospitals or two or more community centres. Where the mental health service organisation consists of multiple service units, those units can be considered to be components of the same organisation where they:

- Operate under a common clinical governance arrangement;
- Aim to work together as interlocking services that provide integrated, coordinated care to consumers across all mental health service settings; and
- Share clinical records or, in the case where there is more than one physical clinical record for each patient, staff may access (if required) the information contained in all of the physical records held by the organisation for that patient.

For most states and territories, the mental health service organisation is equivalent to the Area or District Mental Health Service. These are usually organised to provide the full range of admitted patient, residential and ambulatory services to a given catchment population. However, the term may also be used to refer to health care organisations which provide only one type of mental health service (for example, acute admitted patient care) or which serve a specialised or state-wide function.

Hospital or service unit cluster

A specialised mental health service organisation may consist of one or more clusters of service units providing services in admitted patient, residential and ambulatory settings. For example, a specialised mental health service organisation may consist of several hospitals (clusters of admitted patient service units) and/or ambulatory or residential service unit clusters (for example, a cluster of child and adolescent ambulatory service units, and a cluster of aged residential service units).

To allow service units to be reported individually, but still to be identified as part of a hospital (for the admitted patient service setting), or as part of another type of cluster (for example, other cluster type for ambulatory or residential service setting), a separate reporting level has been created.

- 'Hospital' is for admitted patient service units, and
- 'Service unit cluster' is for ambulatory service units and residential service units.

Ambulatory or residential service units will not necessarily belong to a 'cluster'. However, for some ambulatory service units, the cluster the service unit belongs to may be a hospital that contains both admitted patient and ambulatory service units. In this instance, the *Service unit cluster identifier* for the ambulatory service unit would be the *Hospital identifier*. Other groups of ambulatory and residential service units could also be usefully reported as clusters. For example, clusters may exist of groups of residential services for aged persons, or groups of ambulatory service units in particular geographical areas.

Specialised mental health service units

Identification of service units should not combine target populations—there is no code available to identify 'mixed' target populations. Therefore, where a service delivery outlet provides discrete and specifically funded programs for multiple target populations, each of these should be identified as a separate service unit.

Service provider entity identifiers

The identifiers for the CES NBEDS are:

- State or territory (1 number) (use State/Territory identifier)
- Region (2 numbers) (use Region identifier)
- Specialised mental health service organisation (4 alphanumeric characters)
- Hospital or service unit cluster (5 alphanumeric characters)
- Service unit (6 alphanumeric characters)

Identifiers should **be the same as those reported to the Mental Health Establishments NMDS**.

CES NBEDS data record layout

Table 1. Data record layout for the CES (for data supply files)

Note. Items shaded grey are contextual data variables. Non-shaded items are carer self-report survey items.

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
State/Territory Identifier	Number[1]	1	720081	1 - New South Wales 2 - Victoria 3 - Queensland 4 - South Australia 5 - Western Australia 6 - Tasmania 7 - Northern Territory 8 - Australian Capital Territory METeOR includes code 9, but that is not applicable to the CES survey
Region identifier	String[2]	2	269940	X[X]
Region name	String[60]	4	407187	XXX[X(57)]
Organisation identifier	String[4]	64	404186	A unique identifier assigned to a specialised mental health service organisation, as represented by a combination of numeric and/or alphabetic characters. XXXX
Service Delivery Setting	Number[1]	68	493347	1 - Admitted patient care setting 2 - Residential care setting 3 - Ambulatory care setting METeOR includes code 4, but that is not applicable to the CES survey
Hospital or service unit cluster identifier	String[5]	69	722233 (hospital) 404858 (service unit)	A unique identifier for a hospital /service unit cluster as represented by a combination of numeric and/or alphabetic characters. XXXXX Only one identifier is required at this position. The hospital identifier should be provided for surveys collected in admitted patient service units; whereas the service unit cluster identifier should be provided for surveys collected in ambulatory or residential service units.

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Hospital or service unit cluster name	String[100]	74	407430 (hospital) 409209 (service unit)	<p>The appellation by which a hospital/service unit cluster is known or called, as represented by text. XXX[X(97)]</p> <p>Only one service name is required at this position. The hospital name should be provided for surveys collected in admitted patient service units; whereas the service unit cluster name should be provided for surveys collected in ambulatory or residential service units.</p>
Specialised mental health service unit identifier	String[6]	174	721740 (admitted) 722711 (residential) 750360 (ambulatory)	<p>A unique identifier for a specialised mental health admitted/residential/ambulatory patient service unit, as represented by a combination of numeric and/or alphabetic characters. XXXXXX</p> <p>Only one unit identifier is required in this position. Enter the identifier of the unit where the survey was collected. For an admitted service unit, enter the string for the admitted patient service unit identifier. For a residential service unit, enter the string for the residential service unit identifier. For ambulatory service unit, enter the string for the ambulatory service unit identifier.</p>
Specialised mental health service unit name	String[100]	180	721830 (admitted) 722715 (residential) 750374 (ambulatory)	<p>The appellation by which a specialised mental health admitted patient/residential/ambulatory service unit is known or called, as represented by text. XXX[X(97)]</p> <p>Only one unit name is required in this position. Enter the name of the unit where the survey was collected. For an admitted service unit, enter the admitted patient service unit name. For a residential service unit, enter the residential service unit name. For ambulatory service unit, enter the ambulatory service unit name.</p>

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Admitted patient care program type	Number[1]	280	288889	<p>The type of admitted patient care program provided by a specialised mental health service, as represented by a code.</p> <p>1 - Acute care 2 - Other 7 - Not applicable</p> <p>This data element is conditional and is applicable only for admitted patients. That is, service delivery setting (position 68) = 1 admitted patient care setting. For non-admitted patients, that is, service delivery setting = 2 residential or = 3 ambulatory care setting, enter "7" (Not applicable) for admitted patient care program type (position 280). Refer to p.3 for more information on missing data.</p>
Target population	Number[1]	281	682403	<p>1 - Child and adolescent 2 - Older person 3 - Forensic 4 - General 5 - Youth 7 - Not applicable 9 - Not stated/inadequately described</p>
Sample population	Number[1]	282	637106	<p>1- Entire population 2 - Randomly selected population sub-set 3 - Specifically selected population sub-set 9 - Not stated/inadequately described</p>
Survey language	Number[4]	283	740012	<p>Survey language N[NNN]</p> <p>A numeric 4-digit ABS code using the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) (ABS cat. No. 1267.0, 2016 version).</p> <p>For ABS codes of languages that are less than 4 digits, add trailing zeros to fill to the required length. For example, 11 is Celtic and 12 is English. Enter 1100 for Celtic and 1200 for English.</p> <p>0000 - Inadequately Described</p>

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
				0002 - Not Stated
Type of enumeration period	Number[1]	287	637156	1 - Snapshot 2 - Ongoing 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Help completing survey, person who helped	Number[1]	288	654390	1 - No helper 2 - Family or friend 3 - Language or cultural interpreter 4 - Consumer worker or peer worker 5 - Another staff member from the service 6 - Someone else 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Age range	Number[1]	289	635111	1 - Under 18 years 2 - 18 to 24 years 3 - 25 to 34 years 4 - 35 to 44 years 5 - 45 to 54 years 6 - 55 to 64 years 7 - 65 years and over 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Gender	String[1]	290	635994	1 - Male 2 - Female 3 - Other 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Indigenous status	Number[1]	291	602543	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/inadequately described
Main language spoken at home	Number[1]	292	746556	1 - English 2 - Other 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Mode of statistical survey completion	Number[2]	293	521297	01 - Paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI) 02 - Computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) 03 - Paper forms 04 - Computerised self-administered questionnaire (CSAQ) 05 - Computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) 06 - Telephone paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI) 07 - Interactive voice response (IVR) 88 - Other
Length of elapsed time as a carer	Number[1]	295	745458	1 - < 6 months 2 - 6 months to 1 year 3 - 1 to 2 years 4 - 2 to 5 years 5 - 5 to 10 years 6 - > 10 years 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Relationship to reference person	Number[1]	296	745297	1 - Spouse / partner (including married, de facto) 2 - Mother or father (including step and in-law) 3 - Brother or sister (including step and in-law) 4 - Son or daughter (including step and in-law) 5 - Friend 6 - Other 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Length of time being a client	Number[1]	297	745377	1 - < 1 month 2 - 1 to 6 months 3 - 6 months to 1 year 4 - 1 to 5 years 5 - > 5 years 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Understood what to expect (Q1)	Number[1]	298	751379	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Explanation of legal issues (Q2)	Number[1]	299	751386	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Understood rights (Q3)	Number[1]	300	751139	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Individuality respected (Q4)	Number[1]	301	751141	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Cultural or language support (Q5)	Number[1]	302	751392	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Provide information (Q6)	Number[1]	303	751398	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Opinion respected(Q7)	Number[1]	304	751405	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Involved in decisions (Q8)	Number[1]	305	751150	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Identified as carer (Q9)	Number[1]	306	751414	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Opportunity to discuss progress (Q10)	Number[1]	307	751407	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Opportunity for involvement (Q11)	Number[1]	308	751152	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Opportunity to enhance abilities (Q12)	Number[1]	309	751420	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Staff showed hopefulness (Q13)	Number[1]	310	752444	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Support for carer relationship (Q14)	Number[1]	311	751428	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information for future illness (Q15)	Number[1]	312	751435	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Opportunity to communicate confidentially (Q16)	Number[1]	313	751441	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information on rights (Q17)	Number[1]	314	751593	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information on feedback (Q18)	Number[1]	315	751599	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Information about support (Q19)	Number[1]	316	751608	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information on service improvement (Q20)	Number[1]	317	751614	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information about after hours contact (Q21)	Number[1]	318	751621	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Information about support person (Q22)	Number[1]	319	751629	1 - Yes 2 - No 3 - Don't know 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Effect on relationship (Q23)	Number[1]	320	751648	1 - A lot worse 2 - A little worse 3 - No change 4 - A little better 5 - A lot better 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Effect on hopefulness (Q24)	Number[1]	321	751154	1 - A lot worse 2 - A little worse 3 - No change 4 - A little better 5 - A lot better 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Effect on overall well-being (Q25)	Number[1]	322	751372	1 - A lot worse 2 - A little worse 3 - No change 4 - A little better 5 - A lot better 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described

Data Element	Type [Maximum Length]	Start	METeOR Identifier	Notes / Values
Overall experience (Q26)	Number[1]	323	745320	1 - Poor 2 - Fair 3 - Good 4 - Very good 5 - Excellent 6 - Don't know 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Overall wanted carer involvement (Q27)	Number[1]	324	745488	1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Usually 5 - Always 6 - Not needed 9 - Not stated/inadequately described
Record length =		325		