Families and Children Activity Newsletter

Issue 2 | October 2021

What is in this issue?

This issue focuses on:

- the Department of Social Services grants service directory
- an update on the Families and Children Activity service improvements
- critical incident reporting
- understanding and using the Data Exchange
- answers to questions about the Data Exchange from advisory group meetings in September 2021.

The department encourages providers to circulate this newsletter to their staff. If staff would like to receive the newsletter directly, they can send their email addresses to families@dss.gov.au.

The department is open to feedback on the regularity, format and content of the newsletter. Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager if you have suggestions.

Grants service directory

The department heard feedback from service providers asking for better ways to communicate and coordinate with other providers in their area.

The department's online grants service directory lists all grant activities it funds across Australia.

Anyone can search the directory by program name, jurisdiction, region, postcode, or a combination of these criteria.

Update on FaC Activity service improvements

Advisory groups

- The department reconvened five advisory groups in early September 2021 to gather feedback on the implementation of key reforms, including the outcomes framework and the program logic and theory of change template.
- Some of the key messages from these meetings are:
  - generally positive feedback on the draft outcomes framework, draft program logic template and draft operational guidelines, with members indicating these documents are useful without being overly prescriptive or restrictive
  - keen interest in how the department will link the outcomes framework to SCORE reporting in the Data Exchange (DEX), and questions about reporting in DEX
  - the merits of community of practice meetings
  - ongoing challenges faced by the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Appendix A** documents responses to some questions raised about DEX at the advisory groups for the benefit of all service providers.
- The department is aiming to publish the program logic and theory of change template in November 2021. It is also working with the Australian Institute of Family Studies to map outcomes in the outcomes framework to SCORE domains in DEX.
- Later this year, the department will continue consultation with providers on better coordination of Budget Based Funded services and Children and Parenting Support services with Communities for Children Facilitating Partners.

Child safety

- The department recently published information on child safety for funded organisations, including a document with frequently asked questions.
- All service providers must meet their obligations to child safety in accordance with the requirements of their grant agreements.

Critical incident reporting

In accordance with operational guidelines for each grant, all service providers funded under the Families and Children Activity must notify the department of critical incidents as soon as possible within 48 hours of the incidents occurring, or within 48 hours of becoming aware of the incidents.

To notify the department of a critical incident, a service provider must complete a critical incident reporting form, which is available on the FaC Activity webpage, and email the form to its Funding Arrangement Manager.

For further information, refer to the critical incident reporting form.

Data Exchange

DEX webinar for service providers

- The department will host a DEX webinar for FaC service providers via Microsoft Teams at **2 pm (AEDT) on Wednesday 13 October 2021**.

- Up to 300 attendees will be able to stream the webinar via their web browsers. The department will record the webinar and publish it online for those unable to attend.

- The webinar will highlight useful resources on the DEX website and provide a recap of the DEX web portal, including how to add SCORE assessments to client records.

- The department emailed an invitation to service providers on Tuesday, 28 September 2021. The invitation includes a link to join the webinar. If your organisation did not receive an invitation, please send an email to families@dss.gov.au and check that all relevant contact details registered with the department are up to date and correct.

- The department is also planning to host a second DEX webinar in early 2022.

Subscribing to updates on the Data Exchange

- The Data Exchange (DEX) has a mailing list for anyone interested in news and general updates, system notifications, policy updates, portal and technical updates, and information on training.

- To subscribe to the mailing list, navigate to the notifications and updates webpage on the DEX website and click on the button named *Subscribe to our updates*.

Updated guidance on reporting data

- The department published updates to the Program-specific guidance for Commonwealth Agencies in the Data Exchange on 31 August 2021.

- The updates are the same as those referenced in the previous newsletter.

- Service providers must report data in accordance with the updated requirements for their grant programs.

Accessing reports in DEX

The following resources outline how organisations can access and use reports in DEX:

- Overview of Data Exchange reports (3 minute video)
- Accessing Data Exchange reports
- Organisation overview report
- Client outcomes report
- Organisation data quality report
- Resource planning report
- Service footprint report
- Community profiles (2nd edition) report.

DEX handshake function

- Grant recipients that have handshake agreements with subcontractors will be able to view their subcontractors' Partnership Approach data in DEX reports from 1 October 2021. Further information will be available in future notifications and updates on the DEX website.

Appendix A – Answers to questions about DEX from advisory groups in September 2021

1. **How can my organisation keep up to date with changes to the Data Exchange and the release of new training resources?**

   The Data Exchange (DEX) has a mailing list for subscribers who want to receive news and general updates, system notifications, policy updates, portal and technical updates, and information on training.

   Anyone can subscribe to the mailing list by navigating to the [notifications and updates webpage](#) on the DEX website and clicking on the button named *Subscribe to our updates.*

2. **Can I access Data Exchange learning modules without logging on to the Data Exchange?**

   Yes, anyone can access the Data Exchange (DEX) learning modules on the DEX website by navigating to the webpage for [training resources](#) and scrolling to the bottom.

3. **How can my organisation access one-on-one support for the Data Exchange?**

   The Data Exchange (DEX) Helpdesk offers one-on-one technical support to users of DEX. You can contact the Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday.

   The department also publishes a suite of [DEX training resources](#) online. While these resources are not one-on-one support, they cover many topics that providers find challenging.

4. **My organisation reports data in the Data Exchange via bulk file uploads or system-to-system transfers. What resources and support are available to my organisation?**

   The following resources on the Data Exchange (DEX) website are relevant to organisations reporting data via bulk file uploads or system-to-system transfers:

   - [Upload methods](#)
   - [Bulk file upload – Bulk XML upload](#)
   - [Bulk file upload – Technical Specifications](#)
   - [Bulk file upload – How to access reference data](#)
   - [Bulk file upload – Overview of the My Organisation section](#)
   - [System-to-system – Web Services Technical Specifications](#).

   If your organisation requires additional support, please contact the DEX Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday.

5. **The [Program specific guidance for Commonwealth Agencies in the Data Exchange](#) specifies the most relevant SCORE domains for each grant program. Is my organisation required to collect SCORE data for each of these domains?**

No, service providers are not required to report SCORE data for each of the most relevant domains identified in the program specific guidance. Your organisation should report SCORE data for whichever domains are applicable to its grant activity and participants. The department recognises that organisations might report SCORE data for different domains across different participants depending on the needs of each participant.

It is important to note that although the program specific guidance identifies the most relevant domains for each program, it does not prohibit providers from reporting data against other domains that are applicable to their grant activities and participants. In general, however, the department anticipates that providers will usually report data for the most relevant domains as specified in the program specific guidance.

6. **My organisation chooses to report data on 'service setting' to help differentiate how or where it delivers services. What is the difference between the service settings 'video' and 'online services'.**

Section 6.14 of the [Data Exchange Protocols](#) defines each of the service settings that providers can report in the Data Exchange.

The service setting 'video' should be used for two-way contact with participants via a video service such as Zoom, Skype or FaceTime. The service setting 'online service' should be used for services delivered virtually, generally without two-way engagement, such as online training.

It is important to note that service providers are not required to report data for 'service setting', but may choose to do so for their own purposes.

7. **How can service providers check that they have correctly entered data for 'ancestry' and 'language spoken at home' in the Data Exchange?**

Service providers can either login to the Data Exchange (DEX) web portal and confirm the data against each client profile, or use DEX reports to quality check the data.

DEX reports offer an accurate representation of data at a date and time specified in the header of each report. The dataset for each report is updated daily. A provider can use the Organisation Overview Report to check if its data is correct. If its data is incorrect, the provider will need to fix any errors by either using the DEX portal to update impacted client profiles, or as part of the organisation's bulk upload or system-to-system transfer of client data (if applicable).

8. **Will the department translate the outcomes framework into SCORE domains?**

Yes, the department is working with the Australian Institute of Family Studies to link outcomes in the outcomes framework to SCORE domains in the Data Exchange. The department anticipates completion of this work in the next couple of months once it finalises the outcomes framework. The department is in the process of finalising the outcomes framework following its consideration of further feedback from advisory groups in September 2021.

9. **Will the department translate more outcomes measurement tools into SCORE?**

The department is open to translating more outcomes measurement tools into SCORE if there is sufficient demand for particular tools. If your organisation would like the department to consider translating a particular tool, please notify your Funding Arrangement Manager.

The department's [SCORE Translation Matrix](#) currently includes translations for ten tools:

- Child Neglect Index
- Carers Star
- Growth Empowerment Measure
- Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale
- Kessler Psychological Distress Scale
- Outcome Rating Scale
- Parenting, Empowerment and Efficacy Measure
- Personal Wellbeing Index
- Sessions Rating Scale
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

The Matrix also includes a generic translation matrix template for service providers to translate their own in-house outcomes measurement tools.

10. **Does the department expect service providers to use validated outcomes measurement tools?**

No, service providers have flexibility to decide how they measure outcomes. Some providers might choose to use validated tools whereas others might choose to use in-house or self-assessment tools.

The department encourages providers to consider validated tools where applicable because these are psychometrically tested for reliability (the ability of the tool to produce consistent results), validity (the ability of the tool to produce true results), and sensitivity (the probability of correctly identifying a participant with the condition).

If, however, your organisation prefers to use in-house or self-assessment tools, please refer to the [SCORE Translation Matrix](#) for guidance on translating these types of tools into SCORE.

11. **Is data from the Data Exchange included in datasets owned by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare?**

No, Data Exchange data is not included in datasets owned by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.