



Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide

Introduction and overview

Audience

This information guide is intended for all individual healthcare providers and organisations seeking to participate in the Healthcare Identifiers (HI) Service. This information will be useful to you if you are:

- an individual healthcare provider, such as a doctor, dentist and/or allied health professional
- a healthcare manager, such as an administrator, a hospital desk clerk or practice receptionist
- a chief executive of a healthcare organisation
- an officer of a contracted service provider that manages healthcare related information on behalf of a healthcare organisation.

Benefits of the Healthcare Identifiers Service

Communication of health information is a vital part of effective healthcare. The accurate identification of individuals is critical in all health communication. Mismatching of patients with their records and results is a documented problem for the health system and a clear link has been established between avoidable harm to patients and poor medical records management.

Healthcare identifiers have been created to be used by healthcare providers to improve the security and efficient management of a health consumer's personal health information.

Using an Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) provides a way for healthcare providers to more accurately match the right records to the person they are treating and improve accuracy when communicating information with other healthcare providers. This will help to avoid medical mix-ups or one person's information being recorded on another patient's file.

Using identifiers will help give patients and healthcare providers' confidence that the right health information is associated with the right patient at the point of care.

Understanding healthcare identifiers

The HI Service helps to identify people and organisations involved in healthcare across Australia, using a unique 16 digit identification number.

There are three types of healthcare identifiers.

Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI)

An IHI uniquely identifies individuals within Australia who receive healthcare, for example:

- Australian citizens
- permanent residents
- visitors to Australia.

Healthcare Provider Identifier-Individual (HPI-I)

A HPI-I uniquely identifies individuals who provide healthcare, for example:

- health professionals such as general practitioners and specialists
- nurses, dentists and pharmacists
- allied health professionals such as optometrists, speech therapists and social workers
- health professionals employed within public health services
- eligible alternative therapists such as acupuncturists and Chinese medicine practitioners.

Healthcare Provider Identifier-Organisation (HPI-O)

A HPI-O uniquely identifies organisations where healthcare services are provided, for example:

- hospitals
- medical practices
- pathology or radiology laboratories
- pharmacies
- state health departments.

Healthcare identifiers can only be used for purposes described in the *Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010* and *Healthcare Identifiers Regulations 2010*, including electronic referrals, discharges and medication management.

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Healthcare identifiers must be requested, collected and used in accordance with the *Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010* and the *Healthcare Identifiers Regulations 2010*. A failure to do so can constitute an offence under the *Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010* and the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Important information about individual healthcare identifiers

IHIs do not replace Medicare numbers and individuals will still need to use their Medicare card to claim benefits.

Healthcare providers cannot refuse to provide healthcare if an individual does not have an IHI, the individual's IHI is not available, or the individual does not provide enough information to create an unverified IHI.

Role of the Healthcare Identifiers Service

Medicare Australia is the operator of the HI Service and manages the allocation, maintenance and disclosure of healthcare identifiers to authorised users.

The HI Service is made up of the following elements.

- A national database of healthcare identifier numbers. This database does not store any clinical data. It only stores information relevant to healthcare identifiers.
- A Healthcare Provider Directory that lists contact details for healthcare providers and healthcare organisations.
- Access controls which provide secure online access to the HI Service for authorised individuals and organisations.

As the operator of the HI Service, Medicare Australia is responsible for:

- operating and maintaining HI Service information technology systems
- ensuring the accuracy and security of the national database
- processing registrations from individual health professionals and organisations (HI Service registrations for Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registrants will occur automatically)
- disclosing IHIs to healthcare providers in accordance with strict legislative safeguards
- answering general enquiries about the HI Service from the public
- providing helpdesk services to authorised users of the HI Service (contact details are available at the end of this guide).

Who can use the Healthcare Identifiers Service

Healthcare Identifiers have been designed for use by individual healthcare providers and employees of healthcare organisations. Roles for each type of user have been developed so appropriate access to the system can be assigned for each.

To use the HI Service an authorised user must be in one (or more) of the following roles.

- Responsible officer (RO)—the officer of an organisation who accepts responsibility for the participation of their organisation in the HI Service.
- Organisation maintenance officer (OMO)—the officer of an organisation who accepts responsibility for maintaining information about their organisation within the HI Service.
- Authorised employee—an individual within an organisation who requires access to IHI records to assist with patient administration.
- Individual healthcare provider—the health professional who provides healthcare services to the general public.

The following information guides are available to help users understand their responsibilities when using the HI Service.

- *Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide—Responsible officer*
- *Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide—Organisation maintenance officer*
- *Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide—Authorised employee*
- *Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide—Individual healthcare provider*

Individuals can act in more than one of these roles. Refer to relevant guide for information.

Accessing the Healthcare Identifiers Service electronically

Users can access the service with strict access credentials to perform their duties in the HI Service. Functions they are able to perform depends on their role(s). These credentials ensure that each user is able to access the HI Service with a high degree of security and information protection. There are two types of credentials that will be issued by the HI Service.

- An Individual Authentication Token or Individual Public Key Infrastructure (PKI). This token is a physical device required by ROs, OMOs and individual healthcare providers.

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- An Organisation Authentication Certificate or Organisation PKI. This certificate is a software module required by an organisation accessing the HI Service.

Once an authorised user has their access credentials, they can access the HI Service securely through their software system if it is compatible with the HI Service, or using Medicare Australia's Health Professional Online Services (HPOS). For information on developing software for the HI Service contact your software vendor.

Understanding the Healthcare Provider Directory

The Healthcare Provider Directory is a listing of healthcare providers registered with the HI Service. It can include contact and location details, as well as details of services provided.

Once a healthcare provider is registered with the HI Service, they can choose to be listed in the Healthcare Provider Directory and nominate what information can be published.

Users of the Healthcare Provider Directory can search for individual healthcare providers and organisations participating in the HI Service, using their unique identifier or demographic details. This will help when sending secure referrals, discharge summaries and forwarding test requests for patients.

An organisation may want to link a healthcare provider's details to theirs in the Healthcare Provider Directory. The healthcare provider will need to provide their consent before this can take place.

The Healthcare Provider Directory is not a public directory and is only available to healthcare providers and organisations registered with the HI Service.

Understanding organisations

There are two organisation types that operate within the HI Service.

Seed organisation

A seed organisation is a legal entity within Australia which provides or controls the delivery of healthcare services. It must be a healthcare provider organisation that has:

- one or more health professionals working for the entity and providing health services
- one RO
- one or more OMOs.

Typically, seed organisations will be large healthcare provider organisations, for example, a major metropolitan hospital or a large medical practice.

For smaller healthcare organisations or individuals who are sole traders, the practice can be registered as a seed organisation and the healthcare provider can be appointed as the RO and also the OMO. Refer to the *Healthcare Identifiers Service Information Guide—Responsible Officer* for details on registering a seed organisation.

Network organisation

A network organisation is a healthcare provider organisation linked to either a seed or another network organisation, which has an OMO in the hierarchy acting on behalf of the organisation for HI Service purposes.

A network organisation provides services as part of the seed organisation. It can be registered in order to identify an important business area or function within the seed organisation, such as a maternity ward or outpatient clinic within a hospital or surgeries managed under a larger medical practice.

All eligible organisations, whether seed or network, will be issued with a Healthcare Provider Identifier - Organisation (HPI-O) upon registering with the HI Service. This identifier may be used to quickly and accurately identify the organisation in the course of healthcare delivery.

Organisation hierarchies

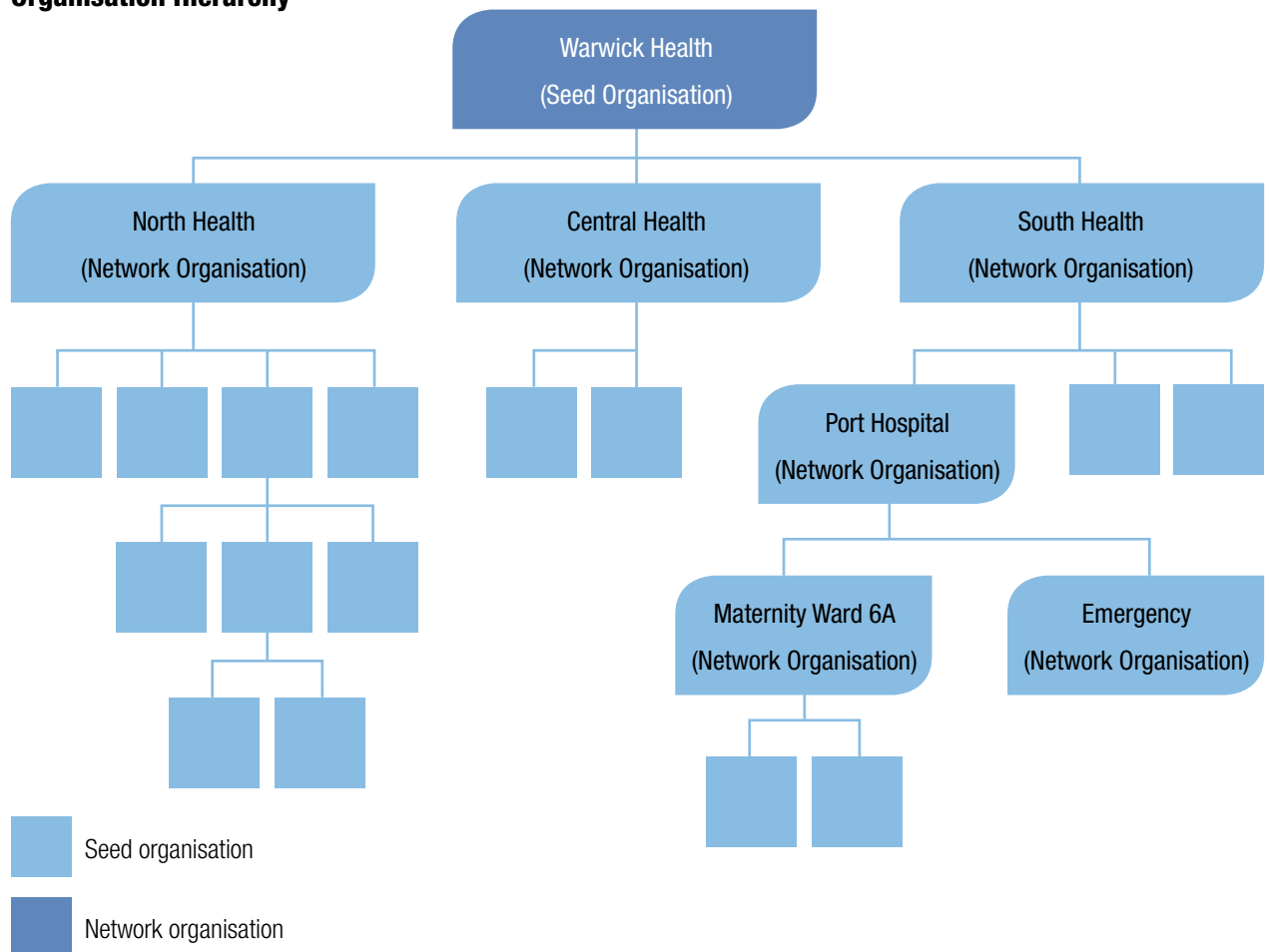
There can be one or more 'tiers' of network organisations under a seed organisation (each network organisation may also have other network organisations linked underneath them if required), creating an organisation hierarchy. Refer to Diagram 1.

There is no limit on the number of tiers that may exist under a single seed organisation or to the number of network organisations that may exist within a particular hierarchy.

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Diagram 1.
Organisation Hierarchy



In Diagram 1, Warwick Health Services (the seed organisation) has several network organisations immediately beneath, servicing the North, Central or South regions of Warwick Health. South Health has its own tier of network organisations, one of which is Port Hospital. Within Port Hospital there are more tiers which identify different health service delivery functions (for example, the Maternity or Emergency departments).

For more information

Online www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

Email healthcareidentifiers@medicareaustralia.gov.au

Call 1300 361 457*

*Call charges apply.