



Final California Aging Reporting System (CARS) Specification Instructions **(From PM 08-04(P) issued February 11, 2008)**

Introduction

The Excel file containing the “**Final CARS Specifications**” for submitting client-level data to the statewide CARS (CA-GetCare) system has two tabs, one for “Specifications” of five files and another tab for “Lookup Tables.” The Specifications tab will introduce you to the required file structure.

We encourage each Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to thoroughly review the attached worksheets immediately, before any development begins and to ask any questions. If you have immediate questions and need help getting started, please e-mail your request for immediate assistance to this address: CARS@aging.ca.gov. You can also send other comments and questions to this mail box.

AAAs working with a software vendor may be tempted to simply forward the specifications to the vendor. The California Department of Aging (CDA) CARS Project Team strongly recommends AAAs be fully engaged in the development and testing of their particular system needs.

Note that there are also changes to the Family Caregiver Support Program (Title III-E) included in these Specifications. Both CDA and RTZ Associates will provide the technical assistance where needed. AAAs should frequently consult the CARS website for periodic updates.

AAAs will soon be notified of available conference calls for questions and answers and technical advice from RTZ Associates.

Instructions

Sites that do not use GetCare locally will have to create and upload five separate files (each in a tab delimited format) to a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site (password profiles and specific instructions will be forthcoming). Most data systems used by AAAs (as well as common spreadsheet applications such as Microsoft Excel) have the ability to export data in a tab delimited file format. Below is a general overview of each of these files (the “Specifications” tab delineates each data element):

Client/Caregiver file: This file captures contact and demographic information for every client (care receiver) and caregiver, and includes available Activities of Daily Living, Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, and nutrition-risk assessment results for registered services.

Enrollment file: This file includes enrollments in every Older Americans Act (OAA) service by each individual client and in the federal National Aging Programs Information System (NAPIS). This file is used to identify both new and continuing participants by service type for the purposes of NAPIS reporting.

Service Units file: This file captures service units for each individual client for registered services. It includes a field to provide counts of participants in programs that are exempt from requiring enrollment (such as Outreach) and that are not registered services. Some programs are exempt from requiring enrollment and are not registered services. The (estimated unduplicated) number of new clients who are exempt from being enrolled, or who declined to be enrolled, will be reported as an aggregate number when reviewing and validating your data on the CARS summary screens. Specific instructions about this process and summary screens will be forthcoming.

Service-Provider file: This file links each service to a specific provider.

Caregiver Relationship file: This file identifies care receiver and caregiver dyads for all family caregiver programs. Recording relationships by each individual service accommodates every possible scenario (for example, a care receiver can receive services from multiple caregivers and can even be a caregiver him/herself).

The following bullet points provide some basic instructions.

- Respond to each data element in the order they are listed in the specifications.
- If a specific data element is not applicable or was not collected by your site, leave it blank (but do not omit the tab documentation).
- For cross-site consistency and added security, sites should not include any labels in the data file.
- Rows marked with an asterisk have predefined values (please see the worksheet labeled “Lookup Tables” for these values).
- A unique “Internal Participant ID” must be provided for each individual. This will be used to link individuals across files and establish relationships between care receivers and caregivers.
- The “Client/Caregiver” file should include information for every client (care receiver) and every caregiver. As mentioned previously, if a data element is not applicable or was not collected, leave it blank.
- While client identities and sensitive data (such as names and social security numbers) are not required for reporting, the system should be capable of handling such information securely. AAAs are encouraged to submit these sensitive data to allow for de-duplication and improve data quality. Client-level information will be stored in an encrypted, HIPAA-compliant database, not accessible by any state staff.