

Release of data from the Communicable Disease Branch - Guidelines for applicants

1 Introduction

The Communicable Disease Branch (CDB), Queensland Health collects and maintains data sets that are relevant to its function of surveillance, prevention and control of communicable diseases in Queensland. The Executive Director of CDB is the delegated custodian of the data held by the branch which includes but is not limited to notifiable conditions, vaccination and the needle syringe program and healthcare associated infections.

The list of notifiable conditions prescribed under the Public Health Act 2005 (PHA) and the Public Health Regulation 2018 is available on the Queensland Health website at:

www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/notifiable-conditions/list/.

Disease prevention and control information, together with disease surveillance reports, are regularly updated and made available in the public domain. They can be accessed at the following web address: www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/.

Notifiable conditions data are publicly available in the weekly communicable diseases surveillance reports that allow users to view weekly and annual totals by disease for the whole of Queensland, Public Health Unit or Hospital & Health Service level. Individuals or organisations requiring historical and/or more detailed data will usually need to apply for permission to obtain them.



2 Purpose and scope

The release of data from CDB is subject to governance processes which protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals. This document describes the process by which applications can be lodged to obtain these data and the necessary approvals that are required prior to release of data by the custodian.

This data release process is for access to data from collections that are under the custodianship of CDB as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 CDB data collections

Data collection	Application Name	Type of data
EpiLog	EpiLog - Influenza Hospitalisation Surveillance	Influenza Hospitalisation Surveillance
Healthcare-associated infection surveillance data	Multiprac	State-wide surveillance data about healthcare-acquired infections collected in Queensland Health public hospitals.
Notifiable conditions data	Notifiable Conditions System (NOCS)	Surveillance data for notifiable communicable diseases as per schedule 1 of the <i>Public Health Regulation 2018</i> .
Vaccination records	Vaccination Information and Vaccine Administration System (VIVAS)	Recording, monitoring and administration of vaccinations provided in Queensland and orders for and distribution of vaccines to service providers.

Please note that CDB cannot in general provide data about test results from AUSLAB. The data custodian of AUSLAB data is the Executive Director of Pathology Queensland.

CDB can provide data about notifications which are based on a positive test result for a notifiable condition from AUSLAB, or private laboratories. CDB cannot provide data from systems for which the data custodian is outside of CDB's responsibility. A list of data custodians in Queensland Health is available via the below link:

www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/157123/20190412-PHA-data_custodian-list.pdf

3 Principles governing data provision

Aggregated and non-identifiable data that are not readily available in the publicly available reports can be provided in a format that meets client needs and maintains confidentiality.

Requested information may be de-identified to maintain patient confidentiality. De-identification procedures may include but are not limited to:

- Suppression of counts less than 6 when the denominator is less than 1,000 people.
- Suppression of data where population counts are not available or indeterminate.
- Line listed data may be aggregated by different grouped demographics such as age groups, indigenous status or sex where counts are small.

The average time frame for processing data request applications is 14 business days from the date the request was received. However, this may vary depending on competing priorities, staff allocation, workload, available resources and the nature of the request itself.

There is no financial cost to the applicant associated with processing of the application or provision of the data.

4 Access to confidential information for research

The Health Innovation, Investment and Research Office (HIIRO) is the central point of contact for researchers seeking advice and direction on ethical and governance issues associated with the conduct of research using Queensland Health data.

Please refer to: www.health.qld.gov.au/hiiro for further information. Queries about the access to confidential health information using the PHA application process should be directed to HIIRO using contact details listed on www.health.qld.gov.au/hiiro/html/contact_us

4.1 Specific guidance for access to CDB data

Applicants should discuss their communicable diseases data requirements with a member of the Epidemiology and Research Unit in CDB prior to completing their applications. This should ensure appropriate assessment of the request to help determine whether the data are identifiable, potentially re-identifiable or non-re-identifiable.

The provision of non-re-identifiable data for the purpose of conferences presentations doesn't require any interaction with an ethics committee provided the data custodian approves release of the data in these circumstances. If there is any doubt, applicants can be directed to a chair of a HREC to seek clarification on a case-by-case basis.

There are some circumstances where a full HREC review and application under the PHA is required. The CDB staff can provide guidance in data availability in collaboration with HIIRO for research purposes.

5 Data accuracy and completeness

Quality checks are performed to ensure that data are accurate at the time of extraction.

Completeness of data varies across the range of notifiable conditions. Caution should be used when analysing and interpreting surveillance data.

Changes in surveillance methods, diagnostic techniques and reporting practices may contribute to differences in case ascertainment over time. Data may be different to that provided in previous and/or future reports and are subject to change as a result of ongoing data quality processes.

Accuracy of data prior to 2001 cannot be guaranteed as this precedes implementation of the current notifiable conditions and vaccination data collection systems.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their data request, including any limitations of the data, with Epidemiology and Research Unit staff. Prior to the release of data, CDB staff will liaise with the applicant to ensure data extracts are fit for purpose and the applicant has been advised of any relevant limitations as well as any conditions associated with release.

Amendments or revisions to the original request after the approval would require resubmission and further approval from CDB either by the custodian or the authorised delegate.

6 Conditions of release of the data

The release of data will be approved only for the specific purpose stated in the request. The CDB data custodian has the authority to approve data release with or without conditions including the right to comment on the use and interpretation of data prior to publication or to veto its use.

The data shall not be shared/presented or made public in their original or manipulated form, such as publications or presentations, without explicit consent. Use of the same data set for a different purpose will require further approval from CDB either by the custodian or the authorised delegate.

7 Security guidance for recipients of data

Once the data are released to you, they are required to be protected as confidential information under part 7 of the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011*

www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2011-032, the *Information Privacy Act 2009* www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2009-014.

Upon receipt of the requested data, the requestor must agree to:

- Not disclose or share the information to third parties or to another person who has no need to have such information.
- Take caution in relation to the provision of data items that pose a high risk of identification because they may be used to identify specific individual and health services.
- Use a strong password to protect the file and save it in a safe location to prevent unauthorised access of the data.

Epidemiology and Research, Communicable Disease Branch, Department of Health, Queensland
 Email EPI@health.qld.gov.au
 Telephone: (07) 3328 9403
 Fax: (07) 3328 9782

Data are released for the purposes stated in this application only.

Name of requesting person
 Position
 Agency/Institution name
 Telephone Email

Purpose of request

Date Requested
 Date Required
 Disease/s

Data Source NOCS EpiLog Multiprac Other – specify:

Time period/ Date range

Details of data requested (data fields or data types) *
 Sex Indigenous status
 Age (specify age/age range/age group required)
 Geographical breakdown by
 Other specify)
 'Mock up' table attached
 (To further clarify request, 'mock up' table of the data may be attached, providing column and row headings and/or expected sample data)

Output format PDF XLS SQL script (QH staff only) Other (specify)
 Aggregated Counts Percentage Rates
 Line Listing *

Do you plan to publish or present the data in the public domain? Yes No

If yes, specify

I have read and understood the preceding 'Guidelines for applicants' Yes No

Signature/ initials of the person accountable:

* If data becomes identifiable or potentially re-identifiable, then it potentially would require ethics clearance and PHA approval, see section 4 of preceding guidelines.

CDB Office Use Only

Request type

Prepared by Date prepared

File Location

Epi Checked by Date Epi Checked

Epi approved by..... Date Epi approved

.....

Conditions of Release

1. The release of data as requested above is approved
2. The release of data as requested above is approved subject to:
 - right of comment on use of data and interpretation prior to publication
 - right of approval or veto of data and interpretation prior to publication
 - other conditions

Any concern with the release of the data

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3. Release of data as requested above is not approved

Reason why the data is not be released

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Release approved by Signature Date signed

Name

Position Executive Director/ Data Custodian

Date sent Date filed

EPI Kiteworks