
Carer availability

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Identifying and Definitional Attributes

Data Dictionary: NHDD
Knowledgebase ID: 000022 Version number: 1
Metadata type: DATA ELEMENT
Registration Authority: NHIMG Admin status: SUPERSEDED
Effective date: 30-JUN-98

Definition: The availability of a carer. The carer is any person, for example, family, friend or neighbour, who is giving regular, ongoing assistance to the identified client without payment other than a pension or benefit.

Context: Community nursing: the presence of a carer at home is often a determinant of a person's ability to remain in home care, especially if they are very dependent. It is also an indicator of risk if a vulnerable client lives alone, or has no carer. As the focus of care increasingly moves to the community, it is important to monitor the degree of client need, the amount of formal care given, and the presence of a carer. This helps to establish how much of the overall burden is being absorbed by the informal caring system.

The reason for the collection at admission and discharge is that over a care episode, a change in carer status may occur either because the caring load increases, and/or, the carer's ability or willingness to undertake the role ceases or is diminished. This may necessitate discharge of the client from care and has implications for health service utilisation. The coding options are therefore identical to enable comparison of the admission and discharge states. The discharge information refers to the client's state when care was being delivered, not after the event which precipitated their discharge from care.

Relational and Representational Attributes

Datatype: Numeric
Representational form: CODE
Representation layout: N
Minimum Size: 1

Maximum Size: 1

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|--------------|---|--|
| Data Domain: | 1 | Carer not needed |
| | 2 | Lives alone, has a carer |
| | 3 | Lives alone, has no carer |
| | 4 | Lives with another, has no carer |
| | 5 | Lives with another, has a resident carer |
| | 6 | Lives with another, has a non-resident carer |
| | 7 | Lives in a mutually dependent situation |
| | 9 | Missing or not recorded |

Guide For Use: Unless code value 1 'Carer not needed' is used, all other options assume that a carer is required, whether or not one is available.

Where there are several carers, the nurse must decide which of these is the main or primary carer and code accordingly as only one option may be selected for each recording.

The following guidelines are to assist in the selection of the most appropriate code:

1: 'Carer not needed'

Means that the client is able to self care and/or, that his/her therapeutic regime does not require the input of an informal carer. The latter includes those circumstances where it may be inappropriate for a carer at home to undertake a complex procedure requiring a high level of nursing skill. It does not include circumstances in which a carer is available but is unwilling or unable to undertake this role. This should be coded as no carer.

Carer not needed should not be used to indicate the status after a client has died or been discharged to other care. For example, when a carer was required and involved up until the client's death or discharge, the code should be either 2 lives alone, has a carer, or 5 lives with another, has a resident carer, or 6 lives with another, has a non-resident carer, respectively for carer availability at discharge.

2: 'Lives alone, has a carer'

Indicates that a client living alone has an able and willing carer who attends to the client's needs on an ongoing basis.

3: 'Lives alone, has no carer'

Means that a person living alone does not have a carer (relative or friend) willing, or able, to visit for the purpose of assisting with care on an arranged and regular basis.

4: 'Lives with another, has no carer'

Indicates that a client does not live alone but that the other person/s in the household does/do not identify as carer/s, nor is there any external carer available.

5: 'Lives with another, has a resident carer'

Refers to households where a client receives care from a co-resident. If a client and carer are mutually dependent, use code 7.

6: 'Lives with another, has a non-resident carer'

Means that a person who lives with at least one other, nevertheless receives care from an external source, usually a relative who visits on an arranged and regular basis.

7: 'Lives in mutually dependent situation'

Refers to those households where the client and another person are mutually dependent. The critical aspect of such households is that if either member becomes unavailable for any reason, the other is either at high risk or unable to remain at home.

9: 'Missing or not recorded'

Indicates missing information. It should not be considered as a coding option except in rare circumstances, for example, where a client has been in care for a long period and the initial carer availability status was not recorded and is not obtainable retrospectively.

Related metadata: has been superseded by Carer availability version 2

Administrative Attributes

Source Document:

Source Organisation: National Health Data Committee

Comments: The definition excludes formal services such as delivered meals or home help, persons arranged by formal services such as volunteers, and funded group housing or similar situations.

Availability infers willingness and ability to undertake the caring role. In those circumstances where a potential carer is not prepared to undertake the role, or when their capacity to carry out the necessary tasks is minimal, then the client must be coded as not having a formal carer.

The Community Nursing Services Minimum Data Set - Australia Steering Committee recommended the collection of this information at the agency level. In the interests of standardisation,

and considering the possibility that such an item could be a Community Nursing Services Minimum Data Set - Australia contender in the future, it was also recommended that, irrespective of the format such a question would have in agency assessment tools, there should minimally be a possibility of reporting the carer status as stable or unstable.

Data Element Links

Information Model Entities linked to this Data Element

NHIM Functional wellbeing

Data Agreements which include this Data Element
