

Sentinel event

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Sentinel event

Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type: Glossary Item

METEOR identifier: 754857

Registration status: [Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

Definition: A sentinel event is a particular type of serious incident that is **wholly preventable** and has caused **serious harm** to, or the **death** of, a patient.

To be classified as a sentinel event, a strict set of criteria need to be met:

- The event should not have occurred where preventive barriers are available
- The event is easily recognised and clearly defined
- There is evidence the event has occurred in the past.

Sentinel events are further specified into eight events:

1. Haemolytic blood transfusion reaction resulting from ABO (blood group) incompatibility
2. Infant discharge to the wrong family
3. Intravascular gas embolism resulting in death or neurological damage
4. Maternal death associated with pregnancy, birth or the puerperium
5. Medication error leading to the death of a patient reasonably believed to be due to incorrect administration of drugs
6. Procedures involving the wrong patient or body part resulting in death or major permanent loss of function
7. Retained instruments or other material after surgery requiring re-operation or further surgical procedure
8. Suicide of a patient in an inpatient unit.

Collection and usage attributes

Guide for use: Sentinel events definitions can vary across jurisdictions.

Collection methods: Reporting is at the national, state and territory level.

Comments: The list of specified events corresponds to what is listed in the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services (RoGS)* (PC 2022)

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Reference documents: PC (Productivity Commission) (2022) Report on Government Services. Canberra: PC. Viewed 22 June 2022, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services>

ACSQHC (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care) 2018. Australian sentinel events list (version 2) - Development and specifications. Canberra: ACSQHC. Viewed 22 June 2022, <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/australian-sentinel-events-list-version-2-development-and-specifications>

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Has been superseded by [Sentinel event](#) [Health](#), Standard 07/09/2023

**Metadata items which use
this glossary item:**

[Establishment—number of sentinel events](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Establishment—number of sentinel events, total N\[NNN\]](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Establishment—type of sentinel event](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Establishment—type of sentinel event, code N](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Number of sentinel events](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Sentinel events NBEDS 2004–2019](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Type of sentinel event](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022

[Type of sentinel event code N](#)

[Health](#), Standard 20/12/2022