

Sentinel event

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Sentinel event

Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type: Glossary Item

METEOR identifier: 774543

Registration status: [Health](#), Standard 07/09/2023

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

To be classified as a sentinel event, strict 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.

Sentinel events are further specified into ten events:

1. Surgery or other invasive procedure performed on the wrong site resulting in serious harm or death
2. Surgery or other invasive procedure performed on the wrong patient resulting in serious harm or death
3. Wrong surgical or other invasive procedure performed on a patient resulting in serious harm or death
4. Unintended retention of a foreign object in a patient after surgery or other invasive procedure resulting in serious harm or death
5. Haemolytic blood transfusion reaction resulting from ABO incompatibility resulting in serious harm or death
6. Suspected suicide of a patient in an acute psychiatric unit or acute psychiatric ward
7. Medication error resulting in serious harm or death
8. Use of physical or mechanical restraint resulting in serious harm or death
9. Discharge or release of an infant or child to an unauthorised person.
10. Use of an incorrectly positioned oro- or naso- gastric tube resulting in serious harm or death.

Collection and usage attributes

Guide for use: Australian health ministers agreed version 2 of the Australian sentinel events list in December 2018. All jurisdictions implemented these categories on 1 July 2019.

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:

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

Metadata items which use this glossary item:

[Australian Health Performance Framework: PI 2.2.3–Sentinel events, 2021](#)
[Health](#), Standard 07/09/2023

[Type of sentinel event](#)
[Health](#), Standard 07/09/2023