

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the 2009/10 SAAP Service Specification

Overall

Q Is the Operating Name the name of the Organisation or the project?

- A. The operating name may be the old project name, or some other name used by the service provider to identify the service (also see the user guide)

Q. Is it essential to name all specifications after the Network Office rather than leave them the same as the operating name so that you can quickly refer to identify the project in question?

- A. COMS specifies the business rules around the naming of service specifications. The name uniquely identifies a Service Specification, and compliance with this rule facilitates consistent data entry to search and select records in COMS. The benefits of this feature will be more apparent over time as Community Services progressively allocates funds to different activities in the one “service” (project in GAS).

The SS name is entered as free text of up to 100 characters and consists of the following:

- a) The acronym of the sub-program i.e. SAAP, OOHC
- b) The geographic coverage; and
- c) A three digit number

Eg: SAAPWestern005 (see also user guide)

Note that these business rules are found in COMS within I-help ‘Create a new SS- 7412’, step 6 ‘enter the name of SS – CBR001’

Q. I have negotiated service activity capacity per annum using the unit cost calculator. COMS will not allow me to enter the accurate negotiated and agreed figure as per the calculator; eg post crisis 15 client per day equates to capacity per annum of 64.5, but you cannot put 64.5 into COMS.

- A. The SAAP unit cost calculator is a tool to assist in the negotiation and projected service level (or capacity) of a Service Provider.

As the COMS system cannot be modified to allow for decimals, it will be necessary to round the annual capacity figure to the most appropriate whole number that best accords with the annual funding allocation.

Q. Will it cost money /resources to shift services towards entering details on COMS?

- A. For the 2009/10 negotiation period, CPO's and FAU staff will enter information on COMS, so there will be no immediate financial implication for services. We are still some way away from Service Providers having access to COMS to add or change their information.

Q. Can I use the negotiation of Service Specifications using the 2009/10 template to modify an agency's service delivery model?

- A. The process of re-negotiating a service specification with an agency provides an opportunity to re-assess the service delivery model and to reach agreement about the Service Activities and Service Results that Community Services will purchase from the agency. Both parties would then indicate their agreement by signing the unique service specification.

The 2009/10 template would normally only be used to re-negotiate where the existing service specification is about to expire or for new services, although there might be the occasional circumstance where we want to negotiate significant changes part way through a SS term.

Q. Is there a difference between the Service Specification dates and the Service Agreement dates?

- A. There may be. A Service Agreement may have one or many service specifications linked to it. The Service Agreement end date will be the end date of the agreed service specification that extends furthest into the future. The Service Specification end date is the agreed conclusion date of the Community Services financial contribution under a unique service specification. (also see the user guide)

Q. Will the 09/10 Specification reflect performance indicators for quality of services provided?

- A. The SAAP Service Specification performance indicators and performance targets remain substantially the same in 2009/10. These are largely based on data collected in the NDCA data collection system.

Client Group

Q. For Case Work Early Intervention and Case Work Post Crisis, are individuals, both adults and accompanying children, counted to determine daily service levels?

- A. Yes.

Q. Is the definition of young people 15-25?

- A. The NCDCA records SAAP youth homelessness information using the categories young people under 15 years, and young people 15 to 25

Q. What is the definition of families?

- A. A family unit is defined as including one or more carers accompanied by one or more child/ren.

Couples (same sex or heterosexual) without accompanying children would be considered a 'family' if they share a room / apartment in a SAAP service designed for families.

Q. Where does 'staying home leaving violence' fit?

- A. It is assumed that only intensive case-management support is provided to this group, as the client is living in their own home. Under the current Service Specification, the Early Intervention category could best fit this group, as it includes a brokerage component and the higher level of support may prevent the client from entering into SAAP accommodation.

Q. How do you clarify Indigenous / CALD status?

- A. The Indigenous and CALD status columns are used if an agency is specifically contracted to provide services to these target groups. It is expected that these agencies will direct service delivery to these identified groups and this is monitored through the PMF.

As per the Service Agreement, there is an expectation that 'mainstream' service providers will continue to offer and provide services to these groups. (also see the user guide)

Q. I am a Community Program Officer (CPO) and I want 50% of a SAAP agency's clients to be Indigenous. Where do I put this in the 2009/10 SAAP service specification template?

- A. Firstly indicate 'yes' to both categories in the Client Group (Section 1.8), then add a note about this requirement in the Special Conditions (Section 1.14), once agreement has been reached between the Department and the Service Provider.

Q. When would accompanying children be identified as individual 'clients' as described in the client group?

- A. When they are not already included in the client group, such as 'Families' or 'women with/out accompanying children affected by domestic/family violence'. (also see the user guide)

Accompanying children could be identified with other client groups, i.e. women & accompanying children, men and accompanying children etc. For example, a women's refuge may accommodate a single woman affected by domestic violence and also support her child with access visits. In this instance you would indicate 'yes' against 'single women' and 'accompanying child'.

Q. How would I identify Helpline/homelessness phone-line clients?

- A. If they are not taken on as a SAAP client, it is likely that these clients would be reflected in the HPCA activity and provided with services outlined within the HPCA category.

If these clients are accepted as SAAP clients, and perhaps become Early Intervention clients or are accommodated, then they would be reflected as such. (also see the user guide)

Q. Why has the client group Transgender/Intersex been included in the client group section?

- A. The purpose of including this group in the Service Specification is to acknowledge that some service providers undertake work with this unique client group. It is expected that these individuals are likely to be recorded in data as the identified gender.

Q. Where would I include young people (15-25) with accompanying children?

- A. You would firstly need to consider the type of service provided by the agency. For example, in the Client Group section (1.8), you would indicate 'Yes' against 'young people' and also 'Yes' against 'accompanying children' (if it's a targeted youth service). (also see the user guide)

Q. Where would I include men with accompanying children?

- A. You would first need to consider the type of service provided by the agency. For example, you would indicate 'Yes' against 'Men' and also 'accompanying children' (if it's a targeted men's service that perhaps offers transitional and/or independent accommodation and/or access visits).

Q. Where do I fit individuals that fit outside of classic client group definitions – eg, transgender individuals, males experiencing DV?

- A. The 2009/10 Service Specification includes the transgender / Intersex client group to capture this unique client group.

Where it is agreed that a service provider should specialise with unique client groups that fall outside standard SAAP client definitions, these may be reflected in the Special Conditions section of the Service Specification (section 1.15)

Geographic Coverage

Q. Does geographic coverage mean the location of the service or the area that clients are referred from?

- A. It depends on how the service operates. Usually the geographic coverage is the area (LGAs) where services are delivered or where the clients of the service live or intend to live if they are homeless. The definition of geographic coverage in the User Guide has been left flexible to reflect the geographic area in which an agency is located, locations that case management will be delivered, or where referrals are accepted from and/or services are delivered.

The CPO and the service provider should come to an agreement about how the Geographic Coverage will be defined for each service specification. For example, if the service provider prefers to be defined in terms of location of case management provision, this can be further noted in the Special Conditions section at 1.14 of the template.

If services are to be delivered in all LGA's, then 'statewide' should be inserted. (also see the user guide)

Service Activities

Q. Define Homelessness Prevention and Community Awareness

- A. Homelessness Prevention and Community Awareness (HPCA) is defined in the Service Activities section of the Service Specification.

People who receive services under this activity are classified as 'contacts'. They are not considered to be 'clients' as they are not 'homeless' or 'at risk of homelessness' (i.e. they do not have a SAAP alpha code).

Activities under HPCA tend to be informative in nature. For instance, they may include telephone advice/ referral and/or information to an individual/other service/ group; service system development through participation in interdependencies, networks and partnerships; and awareness raising / presentation of issues pertaining to homelessness and/or domestic violence (may include talks to school/ TAFE groups/interested parties, presentation at seminars / information sessions /expo's ranging from small to large audience)

The Unit costs are based on an assumption that the average length of service per client/group is around 20 minutes. For the purpose of the Specification, each person in a group/ session would be counted as a 'contact'. However, be mindful that Community Services may possibly purchase only a proportion of the overall HPCA activity that the service provider may undertake throughout the year. (also see the user guide)

Q. Define Case Management Early Intervention Support

- A. Case Management Early Intervention Support is defined in the Service Activities section of the Service Specification. It refers to SAAP clients (with a SAAP NDCA number) who are provided with case-management only. They are not provided with supported accommodation. The purpose of this activity is to address issues before they reach crisis point, and to minimise the need for entry into a SAAP accommodation service.

The SAAP Case Management Early Intervention Support activity is unit costed on an average of 16 weeks intensive case management per client and includes brokerage. (also see the user guide)

Q. Define Case Management Post Crisis Support

- A. Case Management Post Crisis Support is defined in the Service Activities section of the Service Specification. It refers to SAAP clients (with a SAAP NDCA number) who are provided with case-management only. They are not provided with supported accommodation. If a client is in need of intensive case management in order to maintain their accommodation after exiting a supported accommodation service, this would be considered Case Management Post Crisis Support, and costed accordingly

Case Management Post Crisis Support is unit costed based on an average of 12 weeks intensive case management per client. (also see the user guide)

Q. Define co case -management?

- A. Case management, client focused case work and case planning are defined in the Service Specification as Service Activity components.

Co case-management refers to arrangements made with other parties in the support of a client. Usually there is a lead-agency in this arrangement which takes primary responsibility in the co-ordination of a case plan. In some instances, co case-management may be required in the support of a client.

Q Define start and end of crisis?

- A. For homelessness services, crisis related services usually respond to the immediate need for *accommodation*, due to a clients accommodation arrangements collapsing without apparent warning and/or the cumulative effect of complex unmet social needs.

Q. What about brokerage services that do not fit into any of the activities?

- A. In this Specification, brokerage is not a defined Service Activity to be negotiated – unlike support services and supported accommodation services (as a brokerage component was factored into each unit cost).

It is unlikely that Community Services would purchase a brokerage service outside of the Service Specification activities. If, however, the brokerage service was critical to the service delivery of the SAAP service, then details may be included in the special conditions section of the specification.

Q. What is the difference between Supported Transitional Accommodation and Supported Independent Accommodation?

- A. When negotiating this service activity, it is important to focus on the outcomes and service levels to be purchased for the specified period, rather than the circumstances of individual clients.

When CPO's and Service Providers are negotiating between these two accommodation types, it may be useful to consider that the key differences between Supported Transitional Accommodation and Supported Independent Accommodation are:

1. The relative level of support provided to the client AND
2. The relative costs that the SAAP agency would bear in the provision and upkeep of the accommodation type (ie accommodation costs are or are not substantially covered/subsidised by the client/third parties).

For example, it is likely that it will cost the Service Provider more to provide one unit of Supported Transitional Accommodation if they are paying market rent for a property, and they are providing intensive support to a client (including on-call support). On the other hand, the service provider would outlay less for one unit of Supported Independent Accommodation where there is a partnership or leasehold arrangement subsidised through another non-profit housing provider and/or Government Department, and offering lower level support.

When Service Providers enter client information for the SAAP NDCA data collection, Supported Transitional Accommodation services would generally indicate 'Yes' against "SAAP/CAP accommodation".

When Service Providers enter client information for the SAAP NDCA data collection, Supported Independent Accommodation services would generally indicate 'No' against "SAAP/CAP accommodation" and 'Yes' against "Assistance to obtain/maintain independent housing".

In some instances, a client may exit from a SAAP accommodation service into Supported Independent Accommodation, and still require a high level of support. In most cases, this client would still fit under the original purchased Service Activity (as there is an expectation that follow-up support is provided to all clients once exiting the SAAP service). If the client requires high frequency, intensive support (including on-call) then it may be reasonable for the client to be costed under the higher costed Transitional Housing activity.

If a client is in need of Intensive Case Management in order to maintain their accommodation after exiting the SAAP accommodation service, this would be considered Case Management Post Crisis Support, and costed accordingly. The Case Management Post Crisis support is unit costed on an average of 12 weeks intensive case management per client. (also see the user guide)

Where an agency provides services that are a mixture of Supported Transitional Accommodation and Supported Independent Accommodation it may be sensible to include a mixture of capacity from both Service Activities in the service levels.

Q. I am a Community Program Officer with a SAAP service that provides Supported Transitional Accommodation to women and children. The service manages 24 CAP properties that house the clients. What would be their daily service level and would they be costed under Supported Independent accommodation?

A. The CPO and service provider would negotiate the Supported Accommodation Service to be purchased. Once the service is agreed, the daily service level would depend on how many clients the service is able to accommodate; ie the daily bed night capacity and the funding available.

Q. I am confused about the 'nomination rights' of accommodation types in the participant's manual.

A. The concept of 'accommodation nomination rights' has created some confusion in determining the difference between transitional and semi-independent accommodation types. The complexity of accommodation options that have become available to homeless people in recent years has made this concept obsolete.

Service Results

Q. At what point does a client move from crisis accommodation to post crisis?

A. When the client and the service provider agree that the time is right and post-crisis support is available.

Q. How do you manage clients who seek crisis accommodation for one day only?

A. By assessing their needs and providing appropriate services

Q. How does data relate to PMF reporting?

A. The data collected by each service is used by that service to demonstrate compliance with the Service Specification. This is done in the relevant section of the PMF self assessment. Discrepancies in the NDCA data set, and ongoing issues around the integrity of NDCA data need to be addressed and resolved to ensure accurate data reporting.

Service Levels

Q. In some instances, the funding levels for many services doesn't reflect the real cost of running the service, with estimated funding exceeding the actual funding. What do I do in this instance?

A. Community Services will purchase services based on the funding allocated to the Service Provider. Therefore the Service Specification will reflect the results and outcomes of what is being purchased with the funding available. Performance Monitoring will be based on what is negotiated in the Service Specification only. There is an acknowledgement that many service providers deliver services that exceed their allocated funding.

Special Conditions Relating to this Service Specification

Q. What items should sit under special conditions?

A. Service Specification special conditions include aspects of service delivery that don't fit under any other category and are considered essential for Community Services to consider funding the service or for the Service Provider to consider operating the service. (also see the user guide)

Unit Costings

Q. Define unit cost calculator?

A. The unit cost calculator is a tool that was developed to help translate 'daily service levels' into 'capacity per annum'.

Q. Define the calculations behind the unit cost calculator

A. The calculations were developed by Community Services Economics and Statistics branch after extensive consultation with key stakeholders (including SAAP peaks) to determine a range of costs relating to service operations and service delivery in metropolitan, regional, rural and isolated areas. The unit costs were trialled by service providers once an average cost per service activity was determined.

Q. How is HPCA calculated?

A. The HPCA was calculated by Community Services Economics and Statistics branch after extensive consultation with key stakeholders (including SAAP peaks) to determine a range of costs relating to service operations and service delivery in metropolitan, regional, rural and isolated areas. The unit costs were trialled by service providers once an average cost per service activity was determined.

Q. Why are transitional and on-call supported accommodation services costed the same?

A. The costings acknowledge that the costs for service providers in providing these Service Activities have been found to be, on average, the same.

Q. Current service activities and results are related to cost structures. Will it change in future?

A. Ideally, Service Activities and Results are based solely on evidence that indicates the approach that leads to the desired outcome/s. In programs where activities are based on historical policy and funding, the Service Activities and Results are based on a combination of what is currently happening in the program and achievable incremental change based on current policy.

Q: Are the unit costs for SAAP going to be reviewed and updated annually? Will unit costs be indexed?

A: There is no plan to add indexation to the SAAP unit costs. The SAAP unit costs are based on research by Economics and Statistics Branch and negotiation with the Peaks. Simply applying indexation to the unit costs would not necessarily reflect changes in average costs.

The models of service delivery (Service Activities) and the Unit Costs will be reviewed with the implementation of changes to the Commonwealth /State Homelessness policies.

Remember the unit costs are averages so they are used to determine capacity generally but are not always the last word.