

Quick Reference Guide for the Human Services Dataset (HSDS)

QRG: Requirements to access the HSDS

August 2026

The Human Services Dataset (HSDS) is a cross-agency dataset that integrates de-identified data from multiple NSW Government services. The HSDS contains information from NSW residents born on or after 1 January 1990 (**the Primary Cohort**) and individuals related to or relevant to those individuals; for example, family members, relatives, guardians and carers (**the Secondary Cohort**) who have had at least one interaction with certain NSW government services.

The objectives of the HSDS project are to help ensure that effort and funding across government is focussed on interventions that will improve the long-term outcomes for vulnerable children or young persons and their families at the earliest opportunity, and, to use the dataset to design and deliver better government services.

The purpose of this quick reference guide is to provide a high-level overview of the HSDS access requirements. For more information, please refer to the detailed *Guidelines for access to and use of the Human Services Dataset* or for more information about the data contained in the HSDS visit [our website](#).

An overview

Understanding HSDS Access Requirements

Key Documents to Review

1. Public Interest Directions (PIDs)

- Projects must align with **Approved Purposes** under the Public Interest Directions.
- **Project Scope and Planned Analysis** must demonstrate support for improving long-term outcomes for **Vulnerable Children or Young Persons** and their families.

2. **Guidelines for access to and use of the Human Services Dataset**

- Outlines conditions and requirements for accessing the HSDS and should be read in conjunction with the Public Interest Directions.
- Project Scope and Planned Analysis Form (Appendix D of the Guidelines).

3. HSDS Data Breach Response Plan

4. NSW AI Assessment Framework (AIAF) Self-Assessment

Project Application and Approval Process

- Draft the HSDS application
 - Completed Project Scope and Planned Analysis (Appendix D of the Guidelines)
 - Ethics approvals and NSW AIAF self-assessment (if applicable)
 - Required documents for each nominated individual (see below)
 - Submit application and documents to hsds@dcj.nsw.gov.au
- Endorsement and HSDS Data Custodian approval:
 - Applications are reviewed by the Human Services Dataset Governance Advisory Committee (HSDGAC). Feedback on the use of government data for the project may be provided.
 - Following endorsement, final approval is sought from the HSDS Data Custodian.
- Timeline:
 - A Senior Project Officer and Senior Data Analyst will review the information submitted and provide feedback to you. In some instances, you may also be put in contact with relevant agency subject matter experts to discuss use of the data (e.g. Education, Health, Youth Justice, Police) ahead of seeking HSDGAC endorsement.
 - Proposals for endorsement are put to the HSDGAC on the last Friday of each month.
 - Allow approximately 2 weeks for endorsement and 2 weeks for HSDS Data Custodian approval. After approval, additional time (approximately 2 weeks) is needed for project setup and analyst onboarding to the secure data platform.
 - Additional time is required if there are any one-off linkages required.

Note: the above timeframes are indicative. If an Agency represented in the HSDGAC has any questions, the project team must address these before endorsement is sought. Individual Agencies may also request a meeting with the project team to discuss further questions and details of the project.

Ethics Approvals

PHSREC Approval

NSW Population and Health Services Research Ethics Committee (PHSREC) approval is required for all projects proposing to use NSW Health data and/or make a one-off linkage to the HSDS. This requirement may be waived for Government projects using Health data for Funding, Management, Planning or Evaluation of government services in line with the PIDs.

Aboriginal Ethics Approval

Ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) is required if the research project is specifically focused on Aboriginal populations; and/or if research projects report on Aboriginal populations as a distinct group; and/or if Youth Justice data is requested.

Projects Involving AI Components

Identifying AI can be complex, especially when AI is integrated as a feature within applications. The AI Assessment Framework (AIAF) Guidance provides a foundational approach to help you determine whether your proposed work or system contains artificial intelligence (AI).

If you think your project does NOT use AI

Complete the Digital [AIAF Guidance](#) questionnaire (questions are divided into "Non-AI use cases" and "AI use cases").

If your project uses AI

You must:

- Complete the [NSW AIAF self-assessment](#),
- Identify and assess residual risks (e.g. data bias),
- Provide mitigation strategies, and
- Submit your completed NSW AIAF self-assessment to hsds@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Submission Requirements

- Project team must submit the AIAF self-assessment to hsds@dcj.nsw.gov.au and the Research and Human Services Dataset Governance team will share it with the DCJ AI Ethical Review Board for review. The DCJ AI Ethical Review Board recommendations will be provided to the HSDGAC for consideration.
- In addition, if the AIAF self-assessment has a residual risk of high or greater following the application of all mitigation and controls, then it may need to be submitted to the NSW Government AI Secretariat AIsecretariat@customerservice.nsw.gov.au for confirmation.
- A project proposal is considered the first milestone and the AIAF must be submitted at that stage.

Roles and Access Requirements

Access to the HSDS is via the NSW Data Analytic Centre's Advanced Secure Analytics Lab (ASAL). The roles of an Analyst, Advisor and Discussant are outlined below.

Role	Within the ASAL environment	Outside of the ASAL environment
Approved Analyst	Work with unit record data (Tier 2 data)	View the Tier 3 data - aggregated data which has passed through the DAC's Information Protection Gates (IPGs)
Approved Advisor	May discuss and view Tier 2 data on screen but would not have access to undertake data analysis	View Tier 3 data
Approved Discussant	Cannot view any data	View Tier 3 data

Required Documentation by Role

Requirements	Analyst	Advisor	Discussant
HSDS Data Breach Response Plan Acknowledgment	☒	☒	☒
Data privacy and confidentiality agreement	☒	☒	☒

Requirements	Analyst	Advisor	Discussant
National Police Check (for non-government users)	☒	☒	☒
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	☒	☒	☒
Technical qualifications	CV (outline years of experience and proficiency in data analytics tools or software and skills)	Statement demonstrating expertise in the project area and/or suitability	☒
Mandatory Training	<u>Safe Researcher Training Course</u>	☒	☒

Important note for government staff

Approved Analyst (Government staff only)

Government staff who are already approved as an Analyst for one project will now automatically be considered Advisors across all HSDS projects. This means they:

- can view Tier 2 data on screen through screen sharing or 'over the shoulder' for any project
- do not require separate endorsements for each project to act as an Advisor
- must still obtain separate approvals to be designated as Approved Analyst on additional projects.

Discussants (Government staff only)

- All NSW Government staff will automatically be considered Discussants (with access to Tier 3 aggregated data) across all HSDS projects. They are not required to complete the confidentiality undertaking or be endorsed by the HSDGAC or Executive Director, FACSIAR (as delegated by the HSDS Data Custodian).
- This access is limited to viewing preliminary data only. Any use or dissemination of the data (e.g. publishing, sharing externally, or including in reports) still requires formal approval. The Project Lead is responsible for ensuring this is clearly communicated to discussants. When sharing any outputs, Project Leads must make it explicit that the data and outputs cannot be published, shared outside of government, or used beyond the approved scope without formal authorisation.
- Draft reports containing Tier 3 data may be saved in internal platforms like SharePoint, but care must be taken to ensure that only authorised users can access them. Since SharePoint can be accessed by non-government personnel, project teams must apply appropriate access controls to prevent unauthorised viewing or sharing. Additionally, folders containing Tier 3 data must be clearly labelled with "Not for public release or further distribution".
- Consultants and contractors engaged in HSDS projects should only be assigned as Discussants on their own projects, rather than across multiple projects.

Note: This applies only to government staff, contractors, or consultants engaged for the project. Non-government staff (e.g. independent experts) must still complete the full Discussant access process, including endorsement and signing the confidentiality undertaking.

Costs

Accessing the services of the HSDS incurs certain costs, which will be borne by the requesting party (invoiced to the sponsoring/partnering NSW agency, if applicable).

Further details regarding the cost model for using the DAC's ASAL platform can be found in the FAQ-ASAL Costs document.

Further Information

Please visit the [Human Services Dataset webpage](#) for additional resources and policies. Further resources are updated to this page as they become available.

Contact us
For more information, please contact the Research and Human Services Dataset Governance team : E: hsds@dcj.nsw.gov.au