

Choosing and Customizing Data Collection Forms

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Choosing and customizing data collection forms is an essential component of an overall approach to data quality. Data collection forms (Microsoft Word and PDF formats) for all screens in AIRS can be downloaded from either the (www.airсны.org) or Defran website (<http://support.defran.com>). This list is extensive, but most organizations and programs need only concern themselves with a small subgroup of forms and all required fields (those necessary to save the record) for each form are highlighted in black.

Selecting the range of data collection forms is a simple three step process:

1. Identify the forms that will allow your program to capture the required data. These data elements constitute only about 40% of the total number of fields on the data entry screens.
2. Identify which fields are required by your AIDS Institute's contracts and select the corresponding data collection forms. Consult your contract manager and/or data manager, if you are unsure about AI requirements.
3. Decide any *additional* data your program might want for planning and/or evaluation purposes and select the corresponding data collection forms. Many of the forms your program has selected for step one will meet the requirements of steps two and three.
4. The form selection process assumes your program will use procedures to get and record all the necessary data identified in steps one through three. A wide range of program staff--not just data entry personnel--should be involved. Please see *Getting a Handle on Lagged Data* for a discussion of the ways in which groups of staff and various meeting structures can address these data related issues.

Your program can use the forms "as is" or modify them to better suit your program's specific needs, or you can create your own forms using your own software. Making your own forms or modifying the existing forms requires that your staff have expertise to edit the forms using Word or find the right tools to create your forms. One way to customize forms is through the use of color or symbols to highlight critical fields that might be overlooked. The appropriate modifications will depend on the nature of program and staff preferences.

Form development is an on-going process. You may find simple modifications that will enhance the forms usability, while others may turn out to impede use. Pilot any changes your program might want to make (especially when you use forms that you created from scratch) and make adjustments as necessary or when circumstances change. **If you are funded by the Division of Prevention, submit any forms that you have modified or created from scratch to your AI Contract or Data Manager.** While this is optional for the Division of HIV Healthcare, you may want to do the same if you have questions about whether your modifications or new forms meet the AIDS Institute's requirements. In either case, make sure that modifications or new forms capture your program's AIRS service mappings.

Again, for specific questions regarding the data needs of the AIDS Institute, contact your Data Manager or Contract Manager. For questions relating to piloting and/or general forms development, please e-mail me at jlf04@health.state.ny.us or call 212-417-4763, or e-mail Helen Bzduch at htb04@health.state.ny.us or call 518-402-6790.