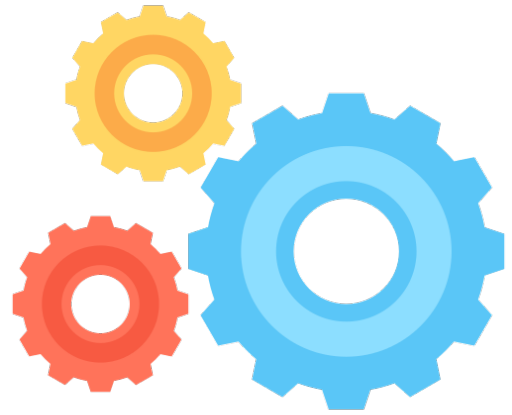




Criminal justice evaluation and performance monitoring

Guideline 4: Activities and outputs

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Introduction

This guideline provides practical advice for collecting administrative data on the activities your service delivers and the activities and outputs it produces.

Data about activities and outputs is essential for tracking service delivery, monitoring performance, and supporting evaluation efforts. This guideline outlines key data points to capture and provides flexible approaches that can be adapted to different service models. This data is part of the Minimum Dataset (MD).

Justice services funded by ACT Government are required to collect the MD, which is comprised of client characteristics (Guideline 3) and activities and outputs (Guideline 4).

This guideline provides practical steps for collecting, recording, and using activity and output data while ensuring consistency and security.

What are activities and outputs?

‘Activities’ is an umbrella term we are using to describe the range of processes that staff at your service undertake to support clients. This includes before their engagement in the service, during their engagement, and after they have exited from the service.

Importantly, activities are not limited to those that involve direct engagement with the client; they can include ‘behind-the-scenes’ activities that the client may not even be aware of. This includes assessing clients for eligibility and/or suitability to participate in your service and allocation of appropriate staff to work with the client.

‘Outputs’ are something your service does or delivers as part of its everyday work. This could be the number of clients you support, the sessions you run, the referrals you make, or the information you provide. Outputs help show how busy your service is and what kind of support you’re offering to the people you work with.

Why collect information about activities and outputs?

Collecting information about the work your service delivers helps to:

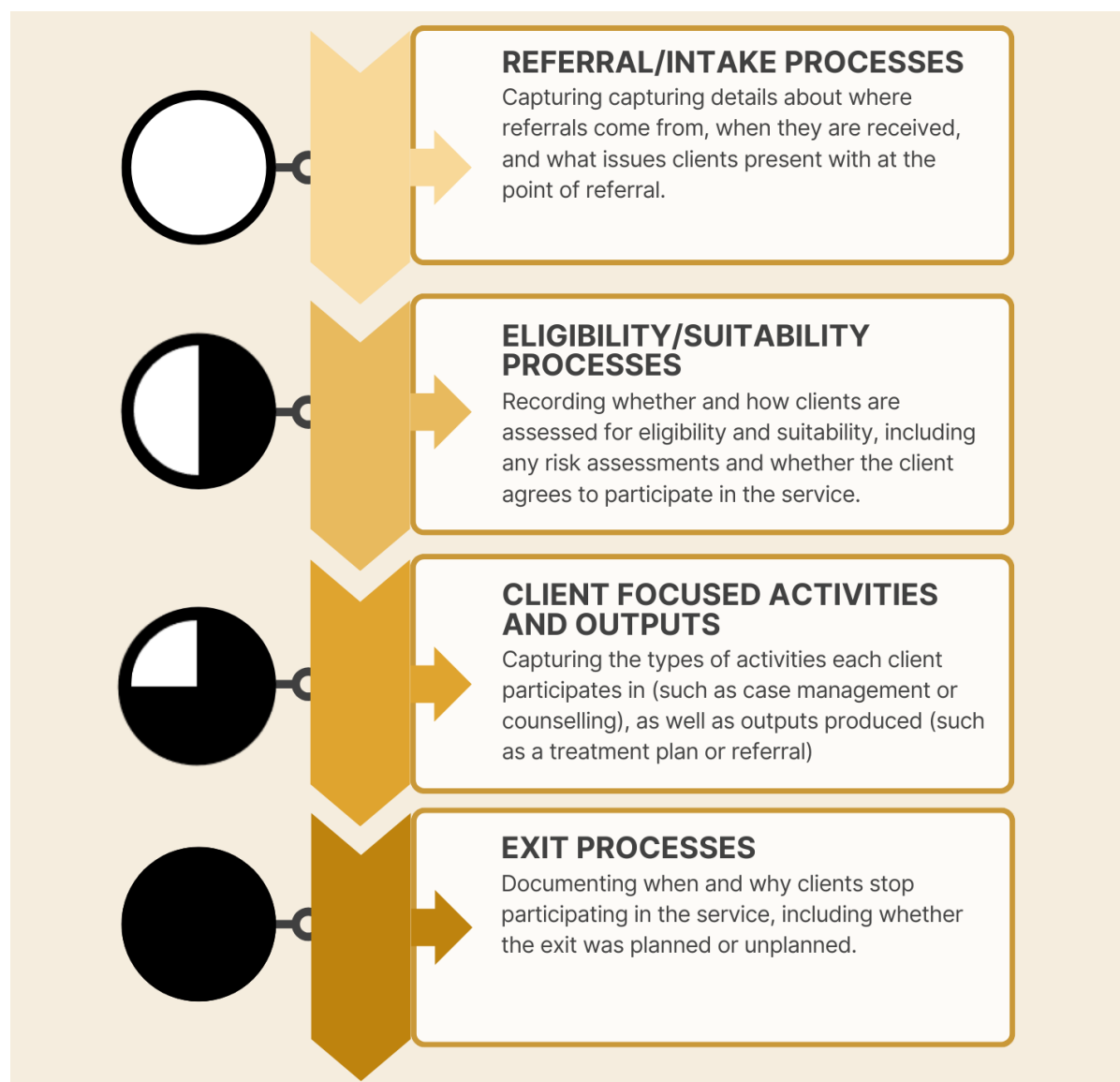
- **Show what your service is doing** — including the types of support provided and how clients are engaged.
- **Track demand and resourcing needs** — by monitoring how often and when different activities are delivered.
- **Support performance monitoring** — helping funders and services understand whether key activities are being delivered as intended.
- **Improve service delivery** — by identifying which activities are most effective and where changes might be needed.
- **Support funding and advocacy** — by providing evidence of what’s being done and where further investment could have impact.

- **Contribute to system-wide understanding** — by supporting better coordination, planning, and responses across the justice system.

What types of information should services be collecting?

Every service that works with justice-involved people can look a bit different, in terms of the key stages of client engagement and the activities they undertake. Because of this diversity, it is impossible to develop guidelines that account for the 'ins and outs' of every service. Instead, we have developed four key data areas that you can piece together, to record key information about activities associated with your program.

These data areas are:



To help illustrate how you can use these to collect key information about your service, we have provided a worked example at the end of this section.

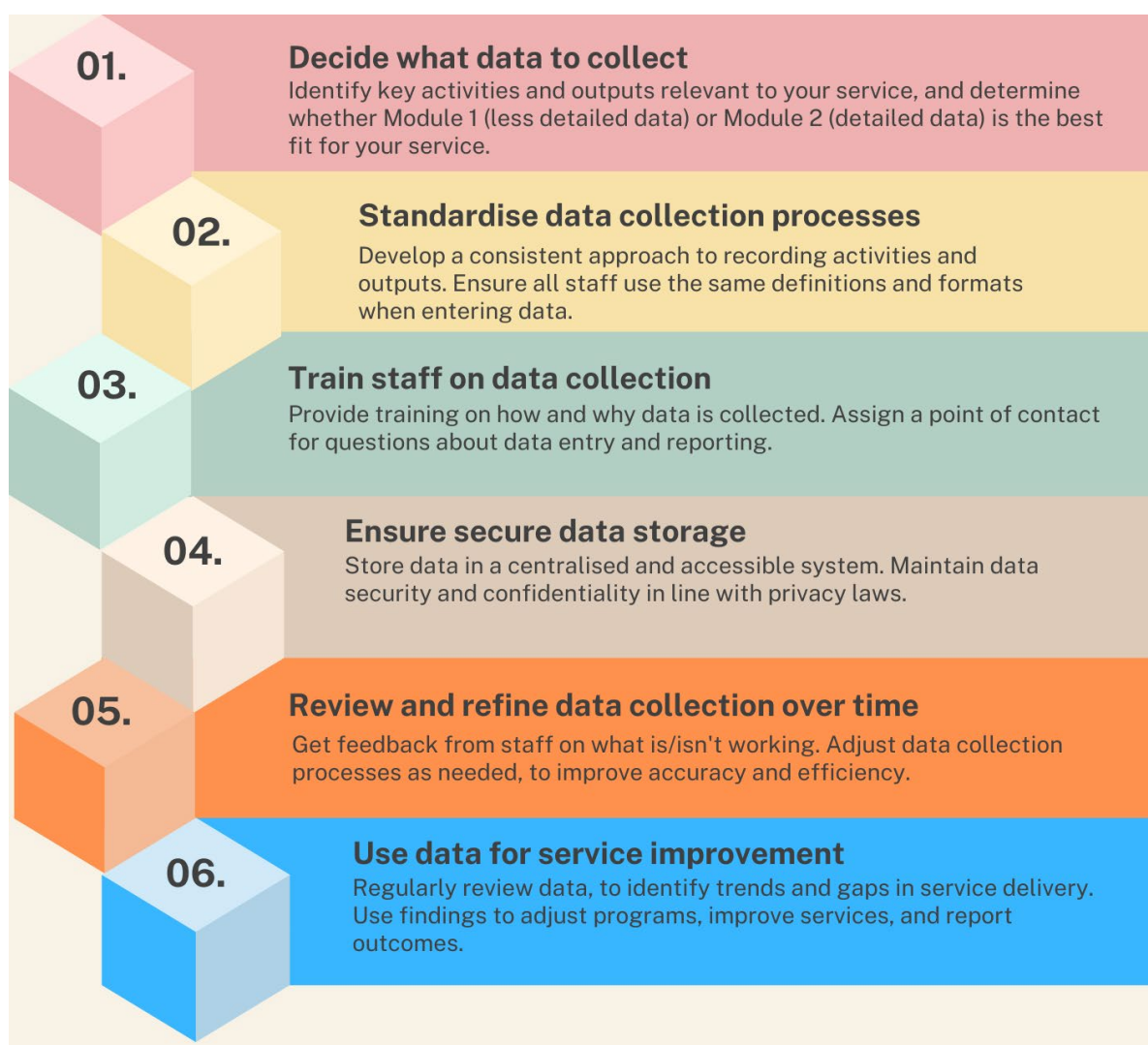
How should services be recording and storing information?

For advice about how to store administrative data about activities and outputs, see Guideline 3.

How can services ensure that information is being collected consistently?

For advice about how to avoid inconsistencies in administrative data about activities and outputs, see Guideline 3.

What are some next steps services can take?



Data items and definitions in the MD for activities and outputs: Referral/Intake processes

These data items intend to capture information about the referrals that you may receive from other organisations. The key data points are:

- referral source,
- date of referral,
- date the referral was received by your service, and
- the primary presenting issues at time of referral.

Referral source

Why collect this information?

- Identify who is making the most (and fewest) number of referrals to your service and whether this changes over time.
- Understand variation in key service outputs – particularly, which clients do and do not go on to engage in the service. E.g., a referral from a criminal justice agency may be less likely to lead to engagement, compared to a referral from another community-based service (e.g., Prisoners Aid ACT).

Table 1: Referral source – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Referral source	Organisation that referred the client to your service. If the client self-referred, please put 'self'	(1) ACT Policing (2) Community Corrections (3) Prisoner's Aid (4) Winnunga Health Service (5) DVCS (6) Aboriginal Legal Service (7) Court (8) Client friend/family member (9) Self (10) Other: (please specify)

Date of referral

Why collect this information?

- Identify patterns of demand for your service (e.g., do referral numbers change over time or follow any kind of seasonal trends?)
- Monitor the number of days between referral and service contact.

Additional Resources

See additional resources for information about why [collecting both](#) date of referral and referral received could be important for your service.

Table 2: Date of referral – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Date of referral	Date on which the client was referred to your service	DD-MM-YYYY
Date referral received	Date on which the service received the referral for the client	DD-MM-YYYY

Primary presenting issues

Why collect this information?

- Identify and describe the needs of clients engaging with your service.
- Identify potential gaps in service delivery (within your own organisation and within the ACT more generally)

Additional Resources

See [additional resources](#) for more information on common presenting needs.

Table 3: Primary presenting issues – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Primary presenting needs	At time of the referral, what were the client's primary needs?	Text

Data items and definitions in the MD for activities and outputs: Eligibility and suitability processes

We recommend collecting information about the following key activities:

- eligibility assessment¹
- risk assessment²
- suitability assessment, and
- client consent to participate.

See additional resources for information about the [differences between eligibility and suitability](#).

Eligibility assessment

Why collect this information?

- To identify timing of assessment after referral was received – longer delays could indicate resourcing issues
- To explain subsequent engagement uptake among clients – delays in assessment could lead to clients being less motivated to engage with your service
- Identify the proportion of clients who are found eligible for your service – key metric for services.
- Identify education/training needs for referring agencies
- To differentiate between clients who were ineligible for the service and those who could not be assessed
- To identify potential barriers to clients engaging with your service

Table 4: Eligibility assessment processes – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Eligibility assessment date of completion	Date eligibility assessment was completed	DD-MM-YYYY
Eligibility assessment outcome	Outcome of the eligibility assessment process	(1) Eligible (2) Not eligible (3) Could not be assessed N/A - Eligibility assessment ongoing/not commenced yet
Eligibility assessment outcome reason	If the client was assessed as not eligible, why was this the case?	Text

Risk assessment

Why collect this information?

- To measure number of days between key service activities/outputs
- To describe risk 'ratings' of clients at time of entry into the service
- If collected at client exit as well, could help to measure impact of service on risk of reoffending

Additional resources

See additional resources for information about:

- the [purpose](#) of risk assessment.

Table 5: Risk assessment processes – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Risk assessment date of completion	Date when risk assessment was completed	DD-MM-YYYY
Risk assessment rating	What risk assessment rating did the client receive?	Dependent on the categories/score utilised by the tool

Suitability assessment

Why collect this information?

- To identify timing of assessment after referral was received – longer delays could indicate resourcing issues
- To explain subsequent engagement uptake among clients
- Identify the proportion of clients who are found eligible for your service – key metric for services.
- Identify education/training needs for referring agencies
- To differentiate between clients who were ineligible for the service and those who could not be assessed
- To identify potential barriers to clients engaging with your service

Table 6: Suitability assessment processes – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Suitability assessment date of completion	Date when suitability assessment was completed by your service for the client	DD-MM-YYYY
Suitability assessment outcome	What was the outcome of the suitability assessment process?	(1) Suitable (2) Not suitable N/A - Suitability assessment ongoing/not commenced yet
Suitability assessment outcome reason	If the client was assessed as not suitable, why was this the case?	Text

Consent to participate in the service

Why collect this information?

- To identify potential barriers to clients engaging with your service
- Identify the proportion of suitable clients who then consent to participate service – key metric for services
- To measure and understand any attrition (reduction) in potential clients at each stage
- Identify if the service has been effective in engaging referred clients.

Table 7: Consent processes – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Consent to participate in the service	Did the client consent to participate in the service?	(1) No (2) Yes (3) NA - Client has not been approached yet
Date consent provided	On what date was consent to participate in the service received?	DD/MM/YYYY
Reason did not provide consent	If the client did not consent to participate, what reason did they provide (if any)	(1) Could not be contacted (2) Did not attend any scheduled meetings (3) Did not believe they would benefit (4) Was already engaging with other services (5) Had moved away from the ACT/Was planning to move away from the ACT (6) Did not trust service (7) Client did not provide a reason (8) Other (please specify)
Other reason did not provide consent	Other reason the client chose not to participate in the service	Free text

Data items and definitions in the MD for activities and outputs: Client activities

Many services that work with justice-involved people provide more than one type of support. For example, a service might offer case management, group therapy, and help with housing. These supports are often delivered together, because clients usually have complex and overlapping needs.

To understand what's working, it's important to keep track of both the activities each client receives (like counselling or housing support) and the outputs your service delivers (like a case plan, treatment agreement, or referral). If your service is achieving good outcomes, funders and evaluators will want to know: what part of the program made the difference? Was it the case management, the group sessions, the referrals, or something else?

When we talk about client-focused activities, we mean the direct support or interventions your service delivers to individual clients. This is different from background tasks (like assessing referrals) or system-level activities (like team meetings or interagency coordination), which are still important but aren't included in this part of the data collection.

Because services work in different ways, we've provided two suggested approaches for recording information about client-focused activities and outputs. You can choose the one that best fits your program:

- **Approach 1:** Focuses on recording activities and outputs that occur after a client begins engaging with your service. This is a good option for services that have brief, infrequent, or one-off contact with clients. (*Example: The High Density Housing Program in the ACT*).¹
- **Approach 2:** Encourages more detailed tracking of each activity and output—such as the date an activity started, what kind of support was provided, and what it led to. This is better suited to structured or program-based services. (*Examples: group therapy programs, court-based interventions, restorative justice processes*).²

You can also include other key activities or outputs relevant to your service, even if they're not listed. The aim is to build a clear picture of how your service supports clients, while keeping data collection practical and useful.

¹ A Morgan et al (2018). *Reducing Crime in Public Housing Areas through Community Development: An Evaluation of the High Density Housing Program in the ACT Reducing Crime in Public Housing Areas through Community Development*. Australian Institute of Criminology.

² M Rossner et al. (2022). *ACT Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List: Process and Outcome Evaluation Final Report*. ANU.

Engagement start date

Why collect this information?

- To measure the length of time that a client is participating in your service
- To identify the length of time between engagement start and other key service activities (e.g., the length of time between referral date and engagement start)

Table 8: Engagement start date – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Engagement start date	On what date did the client begin to participate in activities provided by your service?	DD-MM-YYYY

Activities

Why collect this information?

- To describe the key activities delivered as part of your service for clients.
- Be able to understand differences in the outcomes clients achieved – clients participating in one activity may have gained more benefit than those who participated in another.

Additional resources

See [additional resources](#) for more information about additional information you could collect about key activities and outputs your service is delivering, in addition to 'type'.

Table 9: Activities – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Activity 1	What was the nature of Activity 1 that the client received?	(1) Case management (2) Peer mentoring (3) Counselling (4) Cultural activities (please specify) (5) ID documents (6) Health services (7) Brokerage funding (8) Advocacy (9) Independent life skills (10) Employment readiness skills training (11) Housing support (12) Liaison/Referral to external services (please specify) (13) Other (please specify)
Activity 1 (other)	What was the nature of Activity 1 that the client received?	Free text
Activity 2	What was the nature of Activity 2 that the client received?	Categories repeated from Activity 1
Activity 2 (other)	What was the nature of Activity 2 that the client received?	Free text

Outputs

Why collect this information?

- Describe key outputs developed as part of your service
- Can explain differences in the outcomes clients achieved – clients who received a particular activity/output may have benefitted more than those who did not.

Table 10: Outputs – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Output 1	What was the nature of Output 1?	(1) Case management plan (2) Treatment plan (3) Agreement (4) Letter of apology (5) Other (please specify)
Output 1 (other)	What was the nature of Output 1?	Free text
Output 2	What was the nature of Output 2?	Categories repeated from Output 1
Output 2 (other)	What was the nature of Output 2?	Free text

Data items and definitions in the MD for activities and outputs: Exit activities

Key information we recommend your service collect about exit processes are:

- exit date; and
- exit reason.

Exit date

Why collect this information?

- To measure the length of time that a client is participating in your service
- To identify the length of time clients are 'on the books' for your service

Table 11: Exit date – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Exit date	On what date did the client exit your service?	DD-MM-YYYY

Exit reason

Why collect this information?

- To differentiate between planned and unplanned exits. Planned exits include when the client and caseworker agree that there is no longer a need for the service. Unplanned exits are those where the client has disengaged from the service without prior planning to support them to transition away from the service.

Additional resources

See additional resources for more information about [common definitions of service 'exit'](#).

Table 12: Exit reason – data items and definitions

Variable	Definition	Response categories/options
Exit reason	Why did the client exit the service?	(1) Stopped attending meetings/Could not be contacted (2) Moved away (3) Returned to prison (4) Became ineligible (5) No longer wanted to participate (6) Transitioned into another service or program that could provide further support (7) Completed the program
Exit reason comment	If the client's exit from the service was unplanned, what was the reason for their exit?	Free text

Additional resources

Referral/Intake processes

Date the referral was made and/or date received

We have suggested collecting both the date of referral and date of referral received in the Minimum Dataset, but you may only want to collect one data point, to minimise burden on staff, or because you don't need both dates.

1. **Collect date of referral, if...**you need this information for the purpose of reconciling your records with the referring agency.
2. **Collect date of referral received, if...**you need the most accurate way of counting matters for reporting purposes (e.g., number of referrals received during a particular financial period).
3. **Collect both dates, if...**you want visibility of how long it takes a referring agency to send you the paperwork for the referred client. Longer delays could highlight some administrative issues that require working through.

Primary presenting issue at time of referral

Why was the person referred to the service? This information may not be necessary to record, if all clients referred to your service must meet specific eligibility criteria for inclusion. For example, if you are running a housing support service targeted at justice-involved people who require access to secure housing, recording that every client you meet with has housing needs isn't really helpful or necessary. However, if your service provides broader case management services, or has broader eligibility criteria, recording information about the primary referral reason/s is appropriate.

Eligibility and/or suitability assessment processes

As part of your service, you may have eligibility criteria which mean you only deliver activities to specific people. These eligibility criteria could be related to age, gender, offending type or other factors.

However, even if an individual is eligible for your service, this does not mean that they are suitable; eligibility and suitability are not the same thing.

Suitability could be an additional set of criteria, against which an individual referred to your service is assessed. These criteria may be formally documented as part of your service guidelines. Suitability could also be more difficult to describe, being largely based on professional judgement and expertise. If you don't have specific suitability criteria that staff and referring agencies are expected to use when determining whether someone is suitable for your service, you could end up finding that there are many different views about who is and is not suitable for your service. This also means that people may be assessed as 'unsuitable' for irrelevant reasons (e.g., ethnicity).

Regardless of what eligibility criteria are used as part of your service, or what a 'suitable' referral looks like, as part of the MD, it is important to collect information about whether referrals are assessed and/or found suitable for the service, and the reasons why they may be rejected during

this phase of your service. This is a key metric for describing the demand for your service; it can also give you visibility of matters that are being referred to your service, but are not eligible (or not suitable). In some situations, this information can be used to advocate for additional resources, so that you can reach this additional cohort of referred individuals, or to provide additional training to referring agencies about what your service's eligibility and suitability criteria are.

Sometimes, an eligibility assessment cannot be undertaken, if it requires speaking to the client directly and they are not contactable or choose not to engage with the service to provide the required information. Documenting this information is also important, to distinguish between clients who could not be assessed and those who were not eligible or suitable.



Using information about suitability to educate referring entities

A key activity you may be undertaking, as part of your service, is raising awareness of your service and what you do. This could involve activities like education sessions, meeting with potential referring entities, creating information flyers and pamphlets etc. These activities can be very effective, resulting in a flood of referrals to the service. However, your service then has to spend a lot of time reviewing referrals and may find that most are ineligible or unsuitable. Identifying organisations that are responsible for these referrals can help you to target your education and outreach a little differently, to improve understanding of what your service does (and does not do) and who you can work with, to work towards more holistic service delivery.

Risk assessment

Services may use different 'tools' or questions, to assess whether someone is eligible/suitable for their service or determine what services they may need to provide the individual (see Guideline 3). This includes recidivism risk assessment tools and frameworks, such as the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI–R) or the Family Violence Risk Assessment Tool (FVRAT).

If your service uses a risk assessment tool, as part of your eligibility and/or suitability assessments, it is important to record the date on which the risk assessment was undertaken and the outcome of this assessment. However, we are not suggesting that service providers should include a risk assessment tool as part of their service delivery – this is a decision that should be driven by program requirements rather than evaluation activities.

Client-focussed activities and outputs

Table 13: Common activities and outputs delivered by services and information that could be collected in the minimum dataset

Conferences	Case management plan development	Referral to other services	Participation in programs with set curricula
Date of conference	Date started	Date referred	Date started
Number of attendees	Date completed	Nature of referral (i.e., what type of service was the client referred to?)	Number of sessions attended
Attendee type	Outcome	Referral outcome (referral accepted)	Completed program
Conference type	Nature of actions/goals included in plan	Referral outcome reason (if referral was not accepted)	Reason did not complete program
Conference outcome			

Exit processes

Often, services collect detailed information about clients when they are referred, but only minimal (if any) information about clients when they exit. This may be more likely when services do not involve a defined 'program' and so participation or engagement in activities could be open-ended. This makes recording information about when someone 'exits' difficult and potentially meaningless for some services.

This said it is important to understand the 'status' of clients, in terms of whether they are still actively engaging with your service. This has direct implications for your ability to determine what resources are required to deliver service activities. What is defined as an 'exit' by your service will be dependent on the nature of activities you deliver. However, common definitions include:

- the last day of a prescribed number of sessions the client has committed (or been required) to attend,
- when they are referred to and accepted into another service,
- when they have stopped attending the service, and
- when they have notified you that they no longer wish to engage in the service.

Appendix A: Worked example

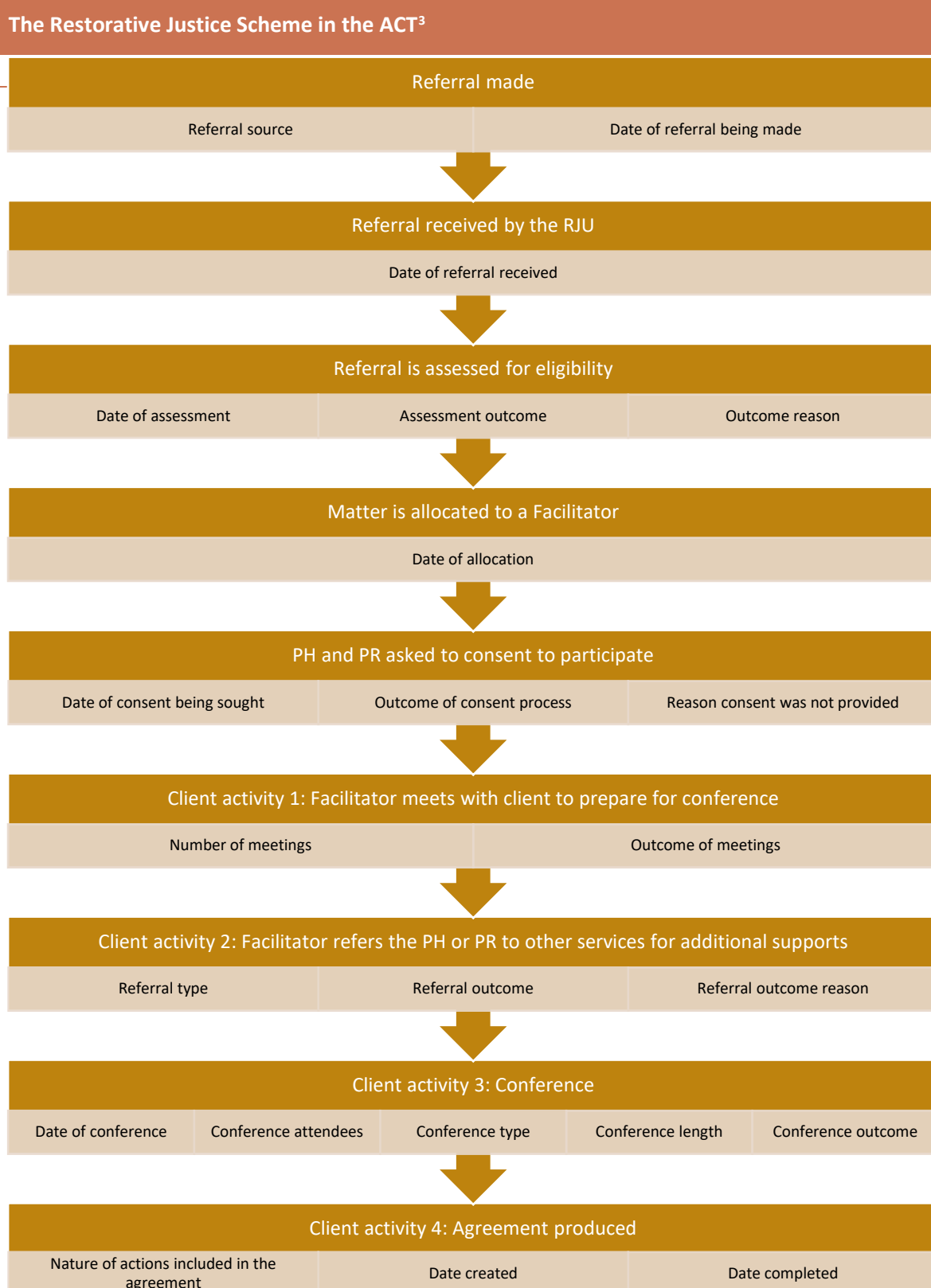
In this section, we provide an example of how a service could use this guideline to improve their administrative data processes.

The Restorative Justice scheme in the ACT is administered by the ACT Restorative Justice Unit (RJU).

There are a series of core activities that are undertaken by RJU service providers with clients, several of which are highly structured (i.e., the conference). As such, we have chosen to use [Approach 2](#) to describe four key client activities:

- **Activity 1: Meetings between the facilitator and both the *person responsible* (PR; offender) and *person harmed* (PH; victim of the offence), to prepare them for the upcoming conference.** These meetings could be recorded as individual activities (e.g., meeting 1, meeting 2, meeting 3) or as one activity. Key information that could be collected about Activity 1 includes the number of times the Facilitator met with the PR and/or PH.
- **Activity 2: Referral of the PR or PH to other services for additional support (e.g., mental health counselling).** Key information that could be collected for Activity 2 includes the organisation PR or PH was referred to, the date on which this occurred and the outcome of the referral (i.e., whether the referral was accepted).
- **Activity 3: The conference.** Key information that could be collected includes the number of participants at the conference (and their relationship to the client), the type of conference (e.g., shuttle conference, online or in-person) and the outcome (e.g., agreement prepared or not).
- **Activity 4: Agreement produced.** Key information that could be collected includes the date of the agreement, when it is expected to end and the nature of actions included in the agreement.

Under the Scheme, the restorative justice process typically ends once the conference has been finalised. As such, the exit process items are not as relevant for this service and so are not included. A map of the key MD elements is below.



³ S Lawler et al. (2025). *Restorative Justice Conferencing for Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Violence: Evaluation of Phase Three of the ACT Restorative Justice Scheme*. Australian Institute of Criminology.