



FOR SPECIALIST PRACTICES

Digital Foundations

Healthcare Identifiers

WHAT ARE HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS?

Healthcare identifiers are 16-digit numbers that are assigned to consumers, individual healthcare providers and healthcare provider organisations to uniquely and consistently identify them for the purposes of healthcare.

Healthcare identifiers do not contain any health information, only demographic information.

Healthcare identifiers are assigned and managed as part of the Healthcare Identifiers Service (HI Service) which is operated by Services Australia.

Healthcare identifiers do not replace Medicare numbers and consumers still need their Medicare card to claim benefits.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS?

Healthcare identifiers help healthcare providers to clearly identify the patient, the treating healthcare provider and the organisation where healthcare is provided. This helps reduce the potential for errors with healthcare-related information and communications with other healthcare providers and gives confidence that the right information is being associated with the right individual.

Healthcare identifiers are the foundation for a range of digital health initiatives, such as the My Health Record system and ePrescribing. Organisations that do not use healthcare identifiers may be unable to participate in national digital health programs or benefit from future measures.

TYPES OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS

There are three types of healthcare identifiers:

1) Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI)

IHIs are for consumers receiving or who will receive healthcare in Australia.

IHIs are automatically assigned to every person enrolled in Medicare or registered with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). Consumers who are not eligible for Medicare or a DVA pension or benefit can apply to get an IHI.

2) Healthcare Provider Identifier – Individual (HPI-I)

HPI-Is are for individual healthcare providers.

HPI-Is are automatically assigned to healthcare providers whose professions are regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Healthcare providers not regulated by AHPRA can apply to get an HPI-I if they meet certain professional criteria.

3) Healthcare Provider Identifier – Organisation (HPI-O)

HPI-Os are for healthcare provider organisations.

HPI-Os are not automatically assigned. Organisation can apply to get an HPI-O if they meet certain organisational criteria.



PRIVACY OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS

The [Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010](#) regulates the handling of healthcare identifiers. This means that a person or entity can only collect, use or disclose healthcare identifiers for prescribed purposes and serious penalties can apply to inappropriate handling.

Individual healthcare providers and healthcare provider organisations can use healthcare identifiers to communicate or manage health information as part of providing healthcare to a patient and managing, evaluating and funding healthcare.

NOTE: Healthcare identifiers cannot be used for purposes relating to a consumer's insurance or employing a consumer.

ELIGIBILITY FOR AN HPI-O

To be eligible to get an HPI-O, a healthcare provider organisation must:

- be an entity that provides healthcare,
- employ at least one person who is a healthcare provider with an HPI-I and who provides healthcare of part of their duties,
- have one employee who will be the Responsible Officer – this person is responsible for applying for an HPI-O, identifying the Organisation Maintenance Officer/s and notifying the HI Service of any substantive change to the organisation, and
- have at least one employee who will be the Organisation Maintenance Officer – this person is responsible for applying for HPI-Os for subordinate organisations, ensuring the HI Service's details about the organisation/s are kept up to date and responding to requests from the HI Service.

APPLYING FOR AN HPI-O

You can use HPOS to register a seed or network organisation in the HI Service and get an HPI-O. Instructions for registering are available at servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/healthcare-identifiers-service-health-professionals/applying.

When applying for an HPI-O, consideration must be given to the nature of the organisation, how it provides healthcare and how it uses and shares health information.

If your organisation is registered as a **seed organisation**, this means it is either a sole operator or the head of a network of healthcare provider organisations.

If your organisation is registered as a **network organisation**, this means it is part of a network of healthcare provider organisations that is subordinate to a seed organisation – for example, a maternity unit within a hospital. It is recommended that each discrete organisation within a network be registered as a network organisation.

How an organisation is set up can affect how information will be attributed to the organisation and can cause doubt about the provenance of information. For example, if a large organisation comprising various entities is registered only as a seed organisation and is participating in the My Health Record system, the consumer will be unable to identify which discrete organisation accessed their My Health Record or added new information.

When applying for an HPI-O, an organisation will need to demonstrate that the organisation is a business entity and provide information so the HI Service can verify the identity of the Responsible Officer.

NOTE: If an organisation chooses to participate in the My Health Record system, additional duties will apply to the Responsible Officer and Organisation Maintenance Officer/s.

USING THE HI SERVICE

Once your organisation has an HPI-O, your organisation will need to identify the employees it authorises to access the Healthcare Identifiers Service to retrieve or verify healthcare identifiers. This will allow the HI Service to verify the identity of any person accessing HI Service so it can provide the required information and log the access. More information about authorising employees is available [here](#).

Electronic searching and retrieval of healthcare identifiers can only be done through compatible software. Many products are already compatible so contact your software vendor to find out more. Information about setting up healthcare identifiers in your clinical system is available [here](#).

OBLIGATIONS FOR MANAGING HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS

The handling of healthcare identifiers is regulated so healthcare providers should ensure they only collect, use and disclose healthcare identifiers for permitted purposes. For healthcare providers, this means that healthcare identifiers are only collected, used or disclosed to communicate or manage health information as part of providing healthcare to a patient, or as part of managing, evaluating or funding healthcare.

Healthcare provider organisations must ensure that information about it and its individual healthcare providers, Responsible Officer, Organisation Maintenance Officer/s and authorised employees is kept up to date by the Healthcare Identifiers Service. Any changes to their details must be communicated to the HI Service.

Many types of changes can be made through HPOS but more significant changes, such as a change of ownership or the replacement of a Responsible Officer, will require the completion of a form.

If the case of individual healthcare providers who are regulated by AHPRA, any changes to their information must be provided to AHPRA and AHPRA will update the HI Service.

NEED HELP?

If you can't locate your HPI-I or HPI-O you can contact to HI Service enquiry line on 1300 361 457.

Helpline	Queries	Contact	Available
Healthcare Identifiers Service	Identifier queries and organisation registration	Phone 1300 361 457	Mon-Fri 8.30am-5.00pm AEST
PRODA Help	PRODA queries	Phone 1800 700 199	Mon-Fri 8.00am-5.00pm AWST
HPOS Help	HPOS queries	Phone 132 150	Mon-Fri 8.00am-5.00 pm AWST
eBusiness Service Centre	Certificates, including Medicare PKI Site Certificates and NASH	Phone 1800 700 199	Mon-Fri 8.00am-5.00pm AEST & AWST