

DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM (DSS) IDENTIFIERS

Objective

It is important that VA medical centers standardize the use of DSS Identifiers and not deviate from nationally directed standards. This instructional guide will outline how to use DSS Identifiers for workload collection.

Background

VHA collects workload data that supports the continuity of patient care, resource allocation, and performance measurement. DSS Identifiers are the single and critical designation by which VHA defines clinical work units for costing purposes. DSS Identifiers are utilized to identify workload for all outpatient encounters, inpatient appointments in outpatient clinics and inpatient billable professional services.

It is VHA policy that workload data must be captured through electronic means including electronic encounter forms, CPRS, QUASAR, Event Capture, and the Laboratory, Radiology and Surgery packages. DSS Identifiers are utilized during the clinic set-up process in all of these workload capture systems. The codes selected for a clinic may 'appear invisible' to a provider but they have been chosen for each clinic when the clinic was set-up. For example, the 'Red Stripes Clinic' would have stop codes associated with the clinic that identifies the workgroup providing the service.

Responsibility for establishing clinic set-ups is varied. At some sites, the DSS Site Team may perform this function. Other facilities may have a Hospital Administration Service to complete this task. Sites should annually review and verify that code associations for their programs are correct.

DSS Identifiers

A DSS Identifier is a VHA term, effective October 1, 1996, that characterizes VHA Outpatient Clinics. DSS Identifiers:

- Indicate the work group responsible for providing the specific set of clinic products.
- Serve as a stable identification method that can be used to compare costs between facilities.

A primary stop code and a secondary stop code compose the six digit DSS Identifier:

- Primary Stop Code The first three numbers of the DSS Identifier represent the primary stop code. The primary stop code designates the main clinical group responsible for the care. Three numbers must always be in the first three characters of a DSS Identifier for it to be valid.
- Secondary Stop Code The last three numbers of the DSS Identifier contain the secondary stop code, or credit stop, which serves as a modifier to further define the primary work group. A VA medical center can use the secondary stop code as a modifier of the work provided in the primary clinical care work unit (identified by the primary stop code).

VHA facilities are required to report all electronic data concerning the provision of services in VHA facilities to the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) in Austin, TX. VHA facilities must ensure that all encounters in outpatient settings, inpatient appointments in outpatient clinics and inpatient billable services are identified, coded, completed and reside in the Patient Care Encounter (PCE) package for transmission to NPCD. Each encounter must be set up with appropriate DSS Identifiers. NPCD only recognizes the primary stop code in workload reports and in the SAS files. The credit stop is informational only to the primary code.

DSS Identifier References

http://vaww.dss.med.va.gov/programdocs/pd_oident.asp

Document	Revision Date	Document Size
Stop Code Directive 2004-053	Sept 29, 2004	142 KB
FY 2008 REFERENCES - DSS IDENTIFIERS		
Reference A: Active DSS Identifiers	October 1, 2007	390 KB
Reference B: Summary of Active Stop Codes	October 1, 2007	812 KB
Reference C: National Alpha Numeric (4 character) Code Descriptions	October 1, 2007	2,161 KB
Reference D: Highlights of DSS ID changes	October 1, 2007	110 KB
• FY08 Highlights	Oct 5, 2007	164 KB
• FY07 Highlights	Oct 16, 2006	92 KB
• FY06 Highlights	Sept 30, 2005	82 KB
• FY05 Highlights	Sept 30, 2005	46 KB

The DSS webpage provides a full range of DSS Identifier information. The references below provide information on active stop codes and the associated definitions. The list of codes and definitions changes at a minimum each fiscal year.

Reference A: Active DSS Identifiers. This is a short list of current codes without definitions.

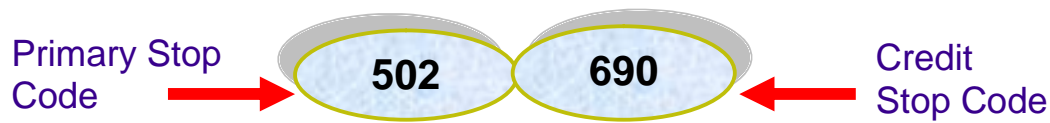
Reference B: Summary of Active Stop Codes. This is a complete list of stop codes with long definitions describing each code.

Reference C: National Alpha Numeric (4 character) Code Descriptions. These codes help to further define a clinic. There are three lists available:

- List A- General Alpha Codes for General Use
- List B- Telemedicine Alpha Codes
- List C- Home Telehealth Codes

Reference D: Highlights of DSS ID Changes. This document provides details of changes to DSS Identifiers during the fiscal year and additional relevant information on workload collection.

DSS Identifier Combinations



This is an example of a primary stop code paired with a credit stop code. The first three characters, 502, is the primary stop code. The function of the primary stop code is to depict the primary clinical workgroup responsible for the type of services provided during the encounter. In this case, the primary clinical workgroup is the Mental Health Clinic for an individual visit.

The next three characters, 690, is the credit stop code. The credit stop serves as a modifier to further define the primary work group or type of service provided. In this case, 690 indicates that the patient's mental health visit was conducted via telehealth technology.

Uses of credit stops includes:

- The secondary stop code modifier can represent the type of services provided for the patient. Example - a Mental Health Risk Factor Reduction Education Group (stop code 566) for Gambling Addiction. The credit stop code used would be 713 "Gambling Addiction" to designate the type of services provided during this group encounter.
 - Coding for this clinic would be 566713
- The secondary stop code modifier can represent the type of provider or team. Example - a Mental Health Residential Care Visit (stop code 503) completed by a social worker (stop code 125). The credit stop indicates the provider of this service.
 - Coding for this clinic would be 503125

Table 1 shows a sample of the information available in Reference B on the DSS web site. Each stop code is assigned a DSS ID number, restriction type and has a distinct name and definition. The restriction type indicates if the code can be used in the "P" primary position, "S" secondary position or "E" in either the primary or secondary position.

The full definition of each code should be read before the code is used for a clinic set-up. The long definition outlines the intent of the code and assists in identifying if the code should be set-up in the primary or secondary position.

Table 1- Examples of DSS Identifiers from Reference B

DSS ID Number	Primary, Secondary or Either	DSS ID Name	Definition
509	E	PSYCHIATRY - INDIVIDUAL	Use by psychiatrist only when care is not delivered in an interdisciplinary setting such as a Mental Health Clinic or PTSD Clinical Team. Records patients visits for the purpose of evaluation, follow-up and treatment provided by a physician trained in mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. Includes physician and administrative services.
513	E	SUBSTANCE ABUSE - INDIVIDUAL	Records patient visits for individual evaluation, consultation, follow-up, and treatment provided by a facility's formal Substance Abuse Treatment Program. Includes clinical and administrative services.
527	P	MENTAL HEALTH TELEPHONE	Records patient consultation or medical care management, advice, and/or referral provided by telephone contact between patient or patient's next of kin and/or the person(s) with whom the patient has a meaningful relationship, and clinical and/or professional staff assigned to the Mental Health service. Includes the administrative and clinical services. **Provisions of 38 U.S.C. Section 7332 requires that records which reveal the identity, diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment of VA patients which relate to drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, infection with HIV, or sickle cell anemia, are strictly confidential and may not be released or discussed unless there is a written consent from the individual.

Clinic set-up examples

Telephone encounter by a psychiatrist-

→ Coding for this clinic would be 527509

The telephone code has a restriction type of “P”, so it must be used in the primary position. The secondary stop code is used to indicate the provider of the call.

Substance Abuse Clinic conducted by a psychiatrist-

→ Coding for this clinic would be 513509

The primary stop code (Substance Abuse Clinic) defines the primary clinical workgroup responsible for the type of services. The secondary stop is used to show that a psychiatrist provided the care.

Outpatient Workload Capture

DSS Identifiers are used to measure the amount of staff productivity and workload. If the provider's encounter is not completed correctly, the result will be a reduced provider productivity level. Also, VERA funding for a station could be negatively impacted.

Workload Capture Issue	Impact
Encounters are completed incorrectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lower provider productivity reported if no encounter is entered/closed out▪ VAMC will not receive credit for the workload▪ Product unit costs will increase if workload was under reported