



Australian Government

**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

First Nations Health Reporting:

Foundation concepts – identifying blank visits in Communicare

Introduction

In selected circumstances, it is possible to unknowingly create visits/client contacts that contain no clinical activity, i.e. 'blank' visits. This may cause higher than expected counts for episodes of care and client contacts and/or prompt a data validation flag in the Health Data Portal identifying a high episode of care to client contact ratio.

Although these 'blank' visits are not technically valid activities to include in National Key Performance Indicators (nKPI) and OSR data there are some circumstances when they are counted. When 'blank' visits/client contacts are counted this inflates reported numbers, reflects inaccurate levels of activity, and causes frustration for health services.

This scenario is possible in Communicare. The good news is this is manageable, and health services can put controls in place to mitigate the risk of 'blank' visits being created. This article provides tips and controls for health services and provides a solution to help identify whether any rogue 'blank' visits might be impacting your Communicare data.

What's happening / context

Understanding Communicare's functionality and user settings can assist health services to manage their nKPI and OSR data.

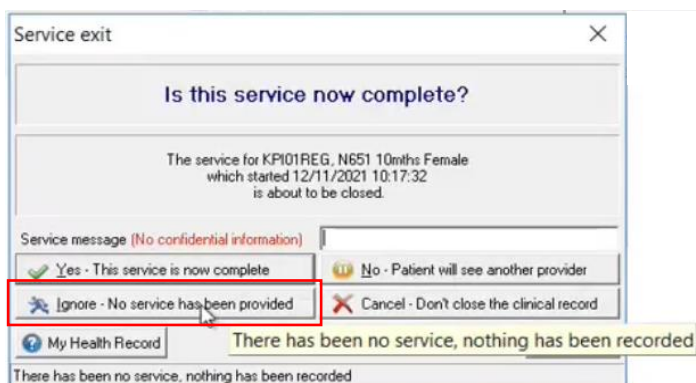
There are two ways to mitigate the risk of creating blank visits:

User education / awareness

When administration staff access a client's record for administrative activities, without the right controls on their user settings, it is possible for them to unknowingly create an encounter (a visit/client contact) that Communicare counts as a clinical encounter.

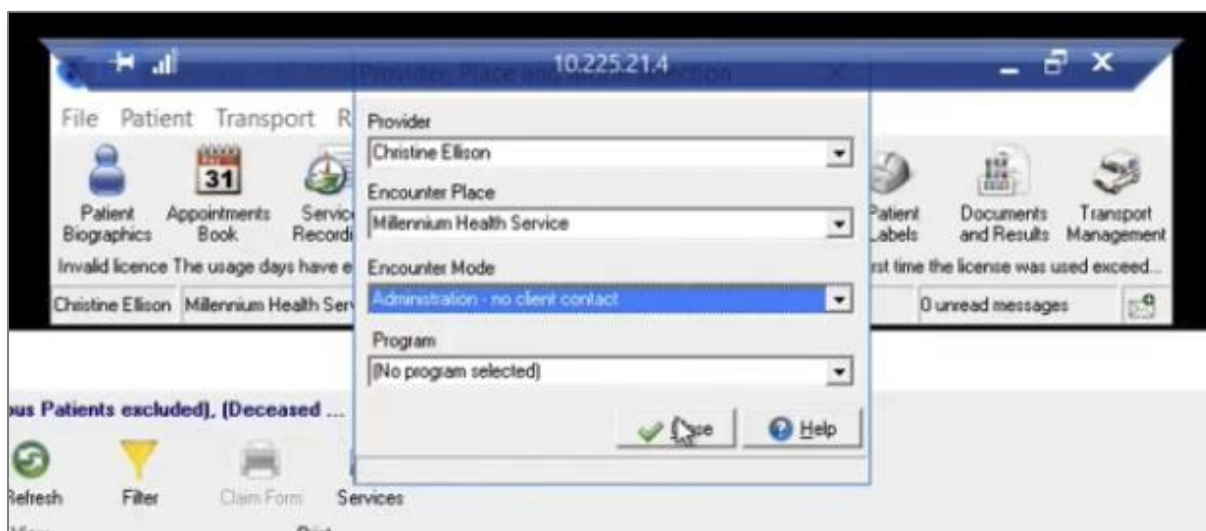
To mitigate this, when exiting the client record, administration staff should ensure they tick the box '*Ignore – No service has been provided*' to reflect that it was an administrative

activity with no client contact (as the Communicare prompt below shows 'There has been no service, nothing has been recorded'):



User settings for administration staff

A simpler option is to prevent staff creating a blank visit in the first place. Communicare has a setting which prevents the creation of 'blank' visits. To use this function, go to user/provider settings, set **Encounter Mode** to 'Administration – no client contact' for each relevant staff member.



TIP: Set the **Encounter Mode** for all administration staff to 'Administration – no client contact'.

Data management tips

You can spot check your data on any given day to identify whether this is happening using Communicare's 'Service Recording' function and search for administration staff that may have created a contact service record. If so, add steps to filter for user.



Identifying blank visits

Communicare has built a useful SQL report that will identify all blank visits created within a specific period e.g. a reporting period. The report, '**SQL Report Template.Encounter_Analysis Blank Encounters between two dates**' needs to be imported by your Communicare Administrator.

Using the insight from this report you can confirm whether this issue impacts your data, and inform which corrective activities may be useful, to ensure your data accurately reflect clinical service delivery.

To access the report and instructions please contact the Communicare Service Desk.

Key takeaways:

- Creation of 'blank' visits inaccurately reflects service activity
- Configure the Encounter Mode for administration staff to 'administration – no client contact' to prevent accidental creation
- Use the Communicare report to identify any blank encounters in your data.

Resources

Links to supporting documents, information and further reading:

- **Specifications for nKPI and OSR:** This document is written for health services and clinical information system vendors. It provides a detailed overview of foundation data elements (including differences between nKPI and OSR) and a full explanation of each indicator - covering inclusions, exclusions, counting rules and disaggregation points (including the related data 'measure codes' that you may see in your CIS reports). It also highlights variances in vendor implementation for some data. You can access the Specifications here: <https://www.solvinghealth.au/specifications>. Links to CIS vendor documents are also listed at the bottom of this page.
- **Health Data Portal User Help:** A comprehensive suite of resources for Health Data Portal users is available at: <https://dataportal.health.gov.au/> > User Help > Indigenous Health Data Reporting

For more data management tips see the other articles in this series available at: [Clinical Information System \(CIS\) Education Articles](#)