Fact Sheet: Assessment of the Minimal Data Set (MDS), 2007

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Introduction
The development of NAQC’s Minimal Data Set (MDS) was a significant early accomplishment for the Consortium in 2005. The MDS, which consists of 15 common intake questions and eight follow-up questions, offers a standard approach to evaluating smoking cessation quitlines, facilitates performance monitoring and makes possible comparisons between quitlines. To view the MDS intake and follow-up questions, please visit MDS Technical Documents.

Simply put, the “minimal data set” will give quitlines across North America an enhanced ability to understand quitline services, promotions and impacts. By collecting the same types of data, defined in the same way and collected using the same techniques, larger datasets will be available for investigation. This will allow for the examination of issues that no one quitline could sufficiently study independently. Moreover, it brings significant standardization to the field, which builds scientific rigour for the external scientific community. The MDS Implementation Assessment is an important way we can help to maximize quitlines’ investment in the MDS.

Please note that NAQC will not be conducting an Annual Survey in 2007. The MDS Assessment is the primary information gathering tool for 2007. The next NAQC Annual Survey will be conducted in Spring 2008.

When is the MDS Assessment Due?
Quitline funders have until July 27 to complete the assessment. NAQC staff will need the survey data by then in order to complete the analysis and prepare the report and presentation for the NAQC annual meeting in October.

Throughout the implementation period, NAQC staff will be available to help you with the assessment tool. For questions or help, Annamaria Feltracco can be reached at AFeltracco@NAQuitline.org or by phone at (519) 443-6160 EST.

What is the Purpose of the MDS Assessment?
The purpose of this project is to assess how quitlines implemented the MDS, to understand the process used by quitlines to implement the MDS and to identify implementation challenges and facilitators. We are doing this for several important reasons:

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1. When the MDS was completed, NAQC agreed that it would assess implementation and review the MDS questions for any needed revisions.
2. To understand how NAQC can improve support provided to quitlines for processes like the MDS.
3. To determine additional questions that quitlines would be interested in seeing added to the MDS.

In 2006, the Research and Evaluation Working Group started the process of developing a survey tool to assess MDS. After work groups were reorganized, the MDS Assessment Working Group finalized a survey tool to assess MDS. The survey tool was piloted with three quitlines in Canada and the U.S. and revisions were made based on the input from quitline service providers/vendors, funders and stakeholders.

How Will the MDS Assessment Benefit My Quitline?
By participating in the MDS Assessment, you will help produce reports that will allow you to:
- Have confidence using the MDS, knowing how others have implemented the same tool.
- Understand how you can use MDS data to identify service benchmarks with similar quitlines, conduct performance monitoring or engage in research projects more easily.
- Help NAQC understand if the MDS needs revisions, such as additions, to work for your quitline.

How Will the MDS Assessment Be Conducted?
The assessment will be conducted confidentially by NAQC. Once quitlines submit the MDS Assessment information and questionnaire (see below), NAQC will analyze the data and information to understand how your quitline has implemented the MDS as well as its impact on your service. Remember, the MDS Assessment is an assessment of the MDS not your quitline. The MDS Assessment includes two components developed by the MDS Working Group, which are described below.

Part 1: NAQC MDS Process and Impact Questionnaire
The purpose of Part 1 of the MDS Implementation Assessment is to assess the process of implementing the MDS, including NAQC support along with understanding the impact of the MDS on the quitlines and related parties (e.g., service provider/vendor and evaluation organization). NAQC has developed a questionnaire for quitline funders to complete for this purpose. It is anticipated that completing the questionnaire will require participation of the quitline funder, service provider/vendor and evaluation organization. The questionnaire will include issues related to the MDS implementation like technology, resources, support from NAQC and the service delivery. Part 1 will also allow quitlines to identify MDS items that are problematic or require revision. It is also an opportunity to suggest additional items for consideration as part of the MDS or as optional questions.

NAQC consultants will analyze the results of the questionnaire to understand how quitlines implemented the MDS, the challenges they encountered in doing so, assess the support NAQC provided during implementation and the impact of the MDS on all aspects of quitline service. These results will be documented in the NAQC MDS Assessment Report and will be used to develop technical assistance for quitlines, future revisions of the MDS and to inform similar efforts in the future.

Part 2: NAQC MDS Intake and Follow-Up Questionnaire
The purpose of Part 2 of the MDS Implementation Assessment is to understand how the quitlines implemented each
question and response category of the MDS intake and follow-up questions. This means that exact wording used by the quitline for both the question and the response categories will be assessed against the wording in the NAQC MDS. NAQC will also need to understand when each question is asked and of whom it is asked.

Because of the complexity of this step and concerns regarding potential proprietary issues regarding intake and follow-up instruments, Part 2: NAQC MDS Intake and Follow-Up Questionnaire can be completed in one of three ways:

- Complete the Part 2 Questionnaire
- Submit your MDS Intake and Follow-up questions and response categories along with skip patterns
- Submit your MDS Intake and Follow-up tools which clearly indicate skip patterns

Each of these options is more fully explained in the assessment instrument at [MDS Technical Documents 2007](#).

NAQC consultants will analyze the wording of the questions and response categories and the placement of the questions to understand how the MDS is being used. Each quitline will receive a summary of their responses that provides a comparison of their responses to the MDS.

*Remember, the MDS Assessment is an assessment of the MDS not your quitline.*

Please note: Completion of the MDS Assessment may require that different staff within the quitline, including the funder, service provider/vendor and evaluation organizations complete the questionnaire. While different organizations and staff may be involved in completing the assessment, it is the responsibility of the quitline funder to submit both Part 1 and Part 2 of the MDS Assessment to NAQC by July 27, 2007.

**How Will the MDS Assessment Data Be Used?**

- Results of the MDS Assessment will be reported at the 2007 NAQC Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, MN in October 2007.
- An abstract on the MDS has been accepted for presentation at both the U.S. National Conference on Tobacco OR Health (Minneapolis, MN, October 2007) and the Canadian National Conference on Tobacco OR Health (Edmonton, AB, October 2007).
- Each quitline funder who submits a response will receive a report of their quitline’s MDS assessment. This will report will help NAQC to assess how completely and accurately the quitline has implemented the MDS.
- It is anticipated that the MDS Assessment will identify problem areas where quitlines encountered challenges implementing the MDS. The assessment will identify potential changes and modifications to questions and response categories.
- NAQC will use data from the assessment to work with members and develop technical assistance to address ongoing challenges that members have encountered in implementing the MDS, support members’ implementation of the MDS and to develop consensus around revisions and/or additions to the MDS.
- As part of NAQC’s continued support for quitlines, NAQC may approach several quitlines to discuss how information shared in their MDS Assessment could be used to benefit quitlines in North America. For example, if your quitline has a particular lesson that other quitlines might benefit from also learning, NAQC may ask you to volunteer to serve as a case study for MDS Assessment. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Annamaria Feltracco at [AFeltracco@NAQuitline.org](mailto:AFeltracco@NAQuitline.org) or (519) 443-6160.

**Why Participate in the MDS Assessment?**

Participation in the MDS Assessment is voluntary, however NAQC is hopeful that most quitlines will participate in the assessment so that:
- **Quitlines will be able to capitalize on the benefits of the MDS.** Without conducting an assessment of the MDS, quitlines will not know how fully it has been implemented and, thus, how it can compare services and data, improve services and participate in research using MDS data.

- **NAQC will understand changes required to the MDS.** The assessment will help NAQC identify which MDS questions need to be further examined for potential changes to make the MDS more useful to quitlines.

- **NAQC can improve support provided to members and stakeholders.** The assessment will give quitlines an opportunity to tell NAQC what issues were particularly challenging and the support they need to fully implement the MDS.

- **Quitline stakeholders, including researchers, can identify future research opportunities using MDS data.** More research will help quitlines continue to develop effective services and build quitline knowledge of what works and what does not.

**Will My Responses Be Confidential?**
Absolutely. Your responses and how each quitline implemented the MDS individually will NOT be reported. Instead, if your quitline has reported difficulty in implementing MDS and has requested additional support, NAQC consultants will contact you to provide further support to your MDS implementation.

**Will Quitlines Be “graded” Based on the MDS Assessment?**
No. The purpose of the MDS Assessment is to assess the MDS, not the quitlines. NAQC will be reporting on how well the MDS is working for quitlines. That will include information on how well quitlines have been able to implement the tool and what accommodations, if any, have been made to implement the MDS. Information will be reported in aggregate (e.g. 20 quitlines implemented question 1 exactly, 17 implemented it partially, 5 did not implement it at all; 25 quitlines identified support from their vendors as a main facilitator for the MDS implementation, while 22 reported internal staff understanding of the MDS as the main facilitator) or without any identifying information (e.g., several quitlines used more than the MDS response categories for this specific question, with the intention of rolling up responses for MDS reporting; a few quitlines identified they needed additional financial resources to implement the MDS while the majority did not).

**Can the Assessment Be Used By Funders to Determine Which Quitlines Offer “better” Services?**
No. NAQC will ONLY share identifying MDS assessment information with each quitline in comparison to the aggregate results of all other quitlines. No one quitline will have access to the identifiable responses of any other quitline. For quitlines who have not fully implemented the MDS, we will offer support to more fully implement the MDS, if requested and as appropriate.

**How Else Can I Be Involved in the MDS?**
Other researchers are also using NAQC’s MDS for research projects. A small Research Working Group is exploring opportunities for grant funding to conduct a case study analysis of MDS implementation. Quitlines interested in participating as a case study should contact Annamaria Feltracco at AFeltracco@NAQuitline.org or (519) 443-6160.

**How Can I Learn More?**
Participate in the MDS Assessment Conference Call on Wednesday July 11, 2007 3:30 – 5:00p.m. EST or on Friday July 13, 2007, 12:30p.m.– 2:00p.m. EST. Visit NAQC’s website to learn more about the MDS process, documents and materials at [MDS Technical Documents 2007](#).

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