

Calculating waiting times for mental health & addiction target: Faster access to specialist mental health & addiction services

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This document describes the method used by Health New Zealand (Health NZ) | Te Whatu Ora to calculate waiting times for mental health and addiction services. Note the calculation method was updated from the previous version for the 2024/25 financial year onwards.

Waiting times reflect the length of time between the day when a client is referred to a mental health or addiction service and the day when the client is first seen by the service.

Definition

The **waiting time** is the number of days from the date a client was referred to a service provider (team / organisation), to the first in-scope activity (service) for that referral.

Note:

- Clients are referred to mental health or addiction services. The services clients receive are recorded against a referral record and submitted to Health NZ
- Referrals that should not be counted such as declined referrals are excluded from the report
- Health NZ uses data from PRIMHD, the national mental health and addiction information collection of service activity and outcomes data, to calculate waiting times
- Waiting times are calculated for all mental health referrals at district providers, and all addiction referrals at district or Non-Government Organisations (NGO) providers.

The details of this calculation are described below.

Detailed method for calculating waiting times

Please note that we assume that the audience of this section will have a moderate level of understanding of PRIMHD data. For this reason, we have used jargon and have not included a glossary. If you do not understand a term used, the glossary of the **Mental Health and Addiction: Service Use web tool** will be helpful.

Step 1: Determine a list of in-scope referrals

Extract all in-scope referrals with at least one associated in-scope activity. Identify the earliest in-scope activity linked to each referral. An in-scope activity is a face-to-face (see Appendix 1 for full details). Include the organisation ID, referral ID and activity ID in the extract.

Out-of-scope referrals are identified using the following criteria:

- Referrals that have a referral end code of RI (Referral declined - inability to provide services requested) RO (Referral declined - other service more appropriate), or DZ (Routine discharge – no direct contact required)
- Referrals with an associated team type code of 05 (Forensic), 24 (Integrated Primary Access and Choice team) or 26 (Intellectual Disability)
- Referrals without an associated in-scope activity

Step 2: Determine a list of in-scope activities that were provided during the reporting period

Extract all in-scope activities with an activity start date in the period. Include the organisation ID, referral ID and activity ID in the extract.

Step 3: Match the in-scope referrals and first in-scope activities

Using the output from steps 1 and 2 above, match the organisation ID, referral ID and activity ID

- Remove any referral and activities that do not match by organisation ID, referral ID and activity ID
- Remove any duplicate records
- When there is more than activity type recorded on the same datetime, retain just one of the activities (the lowest when the activity type codes are sorted in ascending order)
- When there is more than one activity ID recorded on the same datetime, retain just one of the activity IDs (the lowest when the activity IDs are sorted in ascending order)

Step 4: Calculate the waiting time

Waiting time (in days) = start date of first in-scope activity – start date of referral
(Step 3)

Using the matched list from step 3 above, calculate the date difference in days between the activity start date and the referral start date.

When **waiting time** is less than or equal to 21 days, then duration is categorised as “within 3 weeks”.

When **waiting time** is more than 21 days, then duration is categorised as “more than 3 weeks”.

Appendix 1:

In-scope activities include face-to-face activities, defined as:

Activity type code does not include any of T08, T33, T35, T37, T52

AND

Activity setting code does not include any of WR, PH, SM, OM

Activity type code	Activity type description
T08	Mental health care coordination contacts
T33	Seclusion
T35	Did not attend
T37	On leave
T52	Health Coaching Contact
Activity setting code	Activity setting description
WR	Written correspondence
SM	SMS text messaging
PH	Telephone
OM	Other Social Media / E-therapy