

NCIS coding advice – March 2020

Coding COVID-19 deaths on the NCIS

Consistent coding of deaths related to the COVID-19 pandemic is essential to ensure the deaths can be accurately identified within the court systems, the NCIS and the ICD-10 coding performed by the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the New Zealand Ministry of Health.

To supplement COVID-19 references in cause of death descriptions, the following advice is provided for coding COVID-19 deaths in the court case management systems and the NCIS.

Contact the NCIS Unit on ncis@ncis.org.au with any queries or feedback related to this coding advice.

HOW TO CODE COVID-19 DEATHS

There are two areas on your local systems and/or NCIS in which you can indicate if a death was related to COVID-19:

1. By adding a *Primary Mechanism of injury* as follows:
 - Level 1 – Other mechanism of injury
 - Level 2 – Other specified mechanism of injury
 - Level 3 (free text) – COVID-19 pandemic
2. By linking the case to the NCIS (national) COVID-19 multiple fatality event (MFE)

Note: This is an immediate coding advice. Any further changes to coding practices surrounding COVID-19 will be communicated to coders as appropriate.

EXAMPLE CODING ADVICE

Data field	Coding advice	Notes
Case type – completion*	Death due to natural cause(s)	
Intent – completion*	[blank]	
Location – Incident	[as appropriate]	Where location of COVID-19 exposure is known (for example, Ruby Princess), the location details should be coded to match Where location of exposure is unknown, it is appropriate to code incident to match death details
Location – Death	[as appropriate]	
Mechanism of injury – Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other mechanism of injury • Other specified mechanism of injury • [free text] COVID-19 pandemic 	
Object/Substance – Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No object 	
MFE	Yes	Refer advice below

* Unless coroners finding or statement conflicts with this coding advice (for example, case type determined to be 'Death due to external cause(s)')

COVID-19 MULTIPLE FATALITY EVENT (MFE)

Although deaths will occur over several weeks or months, given that all the deaths relate to a declared pandemic, the NCIS Unit has assigned a national MFE to link all applicable deaths.

What are the MFE details?

MFE number	E-00-2020-00001-09-9
Date of event	11/03/2020*

*The date the pandemic was declared by World Health Organisation has been used as the date of the event.

Why have we created an MFE?

Technically, a pandemic does not meet the all the requirements of the MFE as the dates are spread across weeks or months. However, utilising the MFE functionality within the NCIS allows for immediate capture of COVID-19 related deaths without the need implement additional system changes.

Assigning COVID-19 cases to this MFE reduces a reliance on solely using the cause of death text to identify these deaths at a later stage (as it is unknown whether pathologists will consistently include reference to the COVID-19 in the medical cause of death text). In order to work effectively however, it does require staff at the coronial offices to enter a standard description into a free text mechanism field, and where applicable, link cases to the COVID-19 MFE.

How do you add a case to the National MFE?

This varies depending on your jurisdiction.

New South Wales and Victoria

Link case to existing MFE via the NCIS interface while coding case

1. On the Case detail screen, click on the MFE link on the top left-hand side of the screen, a new MFE screen will open
2. In the Event details section at the top of MFE screen select:

MFE year	2020
Event state	National
Event title	E-00-2020-00001-09-9 - COVID-19 Pandemic

3. In the MFE Associated cases section at the bottom of the MFE screen select:

Case state	[as application – NSW or VIC]
Case year	2020

4. Identify the case from the list provided
5. Select and add the case to the Selected case(s) box
6. Save the MFE screen
7. Close the MFE screen and continue coding the case

Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania

Link case to existing MFE via the local court management system while coding case.

1. On the Case detail screen, click on the MFE box – a new MFE screen will open
2. In the MFE Details section at the top of MFE screen tick NATIONAL

3. Enter or copy the following information into the relevant fields

MFE number	E-00-2020-00001-09-9
Date of event	11/03/2020
Event title	COVID-19 Pandemic
Event details	Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases. COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Australia and New Zealand activated Emergency response plans and various levels of alerts and restrictions. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Deaths reported across multiple jurisdictions.

4. In the MFE Associated cases section at the bottom of the MFE screen select:

Case year	2020
------------------	------

5. Identify the case from the list provided
6. Select and add the case to the Selected Case(s) box
7. Save the MFE screen
8. Close the MFE screen and continue coding the case

South Australia and Western Australia

Link case to existing MFE via the local court management system while coding case.

If any issues arise, contact your system administrator or the [NCIS Unit](#).

New Zealand

No action is required

All cases will be linked to the MFE by the [NCIS Unit](#).