



What is the difference between an agency, a program, and a site record?

Agency records contain information about your overall organization. An agency record is defined as: an organization that delivers services. An agency can be incorporated, a division of government, or an unincorporated group that offers, for example, a food pantry or support group. The agency is the main location of the resource where the administrative functions occur, where the organization's director is generally housed and where it is licensed for business. An agency may or may not deliver direct services from this location.¹

The description should be "a brief narrative describing the agency's main purpose or role". An example of an agency is YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg. It is described as "a charitable organization whose purpose is to foster the growth and development of people and communities in spirit, mind and body".

Site records focus their information on the actual locations where you deliver your services, like the physical and mailing addresses and how to get there using public transportation. The description is "a brief narrative describing the services and other activities at the site". In most cases it is sufficient to say "is a site location of [name of agency]". You can also add additional information about the physical site e.g. "use side entrance" or "is situated behind the Sobeys".

A site is "the physical location at which clients access services provided by an agency". All agencies have a main site, many have additional locations or branch offices. NB: these may be separate from actual meeting locations that can change, once a programme has been contacted, such as AA meetings. The site, in this case would be the office that a client contacts to learn about the meetings.

¹ All quoted definitions are from **AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral**, Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, version 7.0 revised March 2013.

The YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg has several sites e.g.: Administrative Office, Business Training Centre, Downtown Branch, Elmwood Kildonan Branch, Learning and Leisure Centre, etc. They are described as "YMCA - YWCA of Winnipeg Site Location: Downtown Branch".

Program (or Service) records are about the services you deliver. They contain information about the application process, eligibility criteria, and more. The services are "the discrete types of assistance an agency delivers to its clientele". Operationally, services are specific activities that can be classified using the Taxonomy terms. Specific types of services are essentially the same no matter what organization is providing them".

These should be presented in bulleted point form using, wherever possible, action verbs, such as "offers," "provides," "maintains," etc. Ask yourself, "what does this program do for the individual that calls or walks in that door?" It should be very specific, so not "alleviates poverty" though many agencies do that, but rather "provides emergency food hampers" or "offers after-school programming".

Be sure to indicate in your description the appropriate age group, or demographic group, especially if a program is exclusively for men, or only for youths up to 18 years of age. You may also include here any information about application, whether to phone the agency, fill in a form online, or simply drop in.

This helps us to assign the proper codes and create more precise searching, which in the end allows us to make the right referral, giving the right help at the right time.

The YMCA - YWCA of Winnipeg has several programs such as the Adult Day Program, ESL Program, a Mental Health Program, and a Self-Employment Program. These each have a separate record that describes what they do. e.g. "provides English as a Second Language instruction to women in need of child minding * child minding is included in this program". In that record we should include hours, identify at which location this service is offered, who is eligible (youth, seniors, men, women, all) and who to apply (phone, walk-in, apply online) etc.

Please remember that we will take the information you submit, and present it in the database according to established standards so that each similar program may be found by a similar search, allowing for the best possible referral. This means that it may not appear exactly as you've submitted it.