



2024 Australian Early Development Census Privacy statement

Privacy statement

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is an Australian Government initiative managed by the Department of Education and delivered in partnership with state and territory governments.

The Department of Education is committed to the protection of privacy and must comply with the **Australian Privacy Principles** (APPs) contained in the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* (*Privacy Act*) when handling any personal information and sensitive information collected for the AEDC.

State and territory governments and non-government school systems involved in the AEDC collection are also committed to the protection of privacy and must comply with applicable privacy legislation and policies in their respective jurisdictions.

The Department of Education engages a number of service providers to assist with the collection and management of AEDC data and its linkage to other personal records. These service providers are contractually required to comply with the APPs as if they were an APP agency under the *Privacy Act*.

At all stages of the AEDC data collection and reporting processes, the privacy of individuals is protected in accordance with the APPs and, where applicable, relevant state and territory privacy legislation and policies.

What information is collected about my child?

If your child is included in the AEDC, your child's teacher will complete a questionnaire about your child. The questionnaire is called the **Australian version of the Early Development Instrument** (AvEDI) and includes approximately 100 questions across five areas (referred to as domains) of child development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

This information is recorded along with your child's personal information such as name, date of birth, residential address, school, and medical information known to schools. Your child will not be individually identified in any produced reports. For more information on why this information is collected, please see the below section titled 'What purpose is my child's information used for?'

Personal information about your child may be disclosed to their teacher and, as applicable, to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Consultant to assist them in completing the AvEDI.

It may also be disclosed to AEDC State and Territory Coordinators and to data managers from the relevant school sector to ensure that the information collected is complete and accurate. In no cases the AEDC results for your child will be disclosed alongside other personal information that may identify them.

What purpose is my child's information used for?

The AEDC data is used for policy and planning, data analysis and statistical and research purposes. Data is reported at the national, state and territory, community and local community level to help create a snapshot of early childhood development. You can see how AEDC data is published by visiting the AEDC website www.aedc.gov.au.

Once the AEDC data collection is completed, information about children participating in the AEDC is separated into two datasets:

- An 'identified dataset' which has information that can be used to identify an individual, such as children's name, age, residential address and school attended;
- A 'de-identified dataset' which has all the remaining information collected in the AEDC.

The de-identified dataset is used to produce the AEDC results and for other research purposes. The identified dataset is used for data linkage purposes.

Data Linkage

Selected identifying personal information may be disclosed under strict conditions by, or on behalf of, the Department of Education for data linkage purposes. Through data linkage, AEDC data is merged with information from other organisations to improve programs and policies for young children and/or to support research aimed at improving outcomes for children and their communities.

The disclosure and use of AEDC data for linkage purposes is carried out in accordance with the *Commonwealth Arrangements for Data Integration projects Involving Commonwealth Data for Statistical and Research Purposes*. More information can be found on the National Statistical Service website toolkit.data.gov.au.

AEDC data may be linked to:

- Australian Government datasets, including but not limited to the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) and the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) results;
- State and territory government datasets including English as a second language (ESL) studies, Births, Deaths and Marriages registries, immunisation studies records, health records (for example child health records, dental, perinatal, hospital morbidity, mental health, register of developmental anomalies, parenting programs and family home visit records), education records (such as enrolment records, attendance and suspension records), public housing records, client community service and offenders registers;
- Records that both the Australian Government and state and territory governments have responsibility for, such as, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results;
- Information collected by research institutes for linkage and research purposes, with the informed consent of parents and/or guardians of children participating in the AEDC.

Identified data may be retained for up to 10 years (or a longer period as necessary) from the date of collection for the purpose of data linkage longitudinal studies. If the identified data is no longer required for these purposes, it will be securely destroyed.



Research Projects and Studies

De-identified AEDC data may be used by researchers to undertake research and study into early childhood learning and development. The disclosure and use of data is in accordance with the AEDC Data Guidelines. Release of AEDC data, in any form, must ensure that the confidentiality of personal information is preserved, and use of that information complies with the APPs. Further information about the policies and agreements governing the disclosure and use of AEDC data is available from www.aedc.gov.au or contact the Support Line on **1800 092 548**.

Does my child have to participate?

No. Your child's participation in the AEDC is voluntary. If you do not want your child to participate in the AEDC, please notify your child's school immediately. Please note that if you do not notify your child's school, it is inferred that you consent to their participation and their information will be collected in accordance with the APPs.

There are no consequences for children if they do not participate in the AEDC. However, if your child's information is not collected, the quality of the AEDC data will be affected. It is important that as many children as possible participate in the AEDC to ensure that robust and nationally consistent data are produced to help shape the design and application of early childhood programs and policies.

Who is my child's data disclosed to?

Once your child's information is collected by their teacher, it is disclosed to the Social Research Centre Pty Ltd (SRC). SRC is the Department of Education's contracted service provider which manages the collection and storage of the AEDC data.

State and Territory Governments

AEDC de-identified data is disclosed to state and territory governments to inform their own research and policy on early childhood development and produce information on the early development of children in Australia in those jurisdictions. Whilst the de-identified data excludes children's names and identifying information, it includes the names of participating government schools and identifies other schools only as 'non-government'.

Government and non-government school systems

Under the Contracts for the National implementation of the AEDC, each state and territory agree to coordinate the AEDC data collection in government and non-government schools. De-identified data is disclosed to state and territory government and non-government school systems and may be used for policy and program development and research.

McMaster University

AEDC de-identified data is made available to McMaster University (McMaster), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, which developed the Early Development Instrument (EDI). McMaster uses the de-identified data to provide support services for the use of the EDI, for technical calculations, and the EDI Teacher Guide, which are licenced by McMaster to the Department of Education.

Researchers

AEDC de-identified data is disclosed to researchers in organisations including (without limitation) universities; social research institutions; health, education and community policy and planning bodies; government agencies; charities (i.e., not-for-profit organisations) and appropriate commercial entities. De-identified data is disclosed to researchers in accordance with the AEDC Data Guidelines.

Data Linkage Units

The Department of Education has engaged a number of data linkage units to link data for research purposes. The Department may also allow Commonwealth, State and Territory government agencies to link deidentified AEDC data with other data on an enduring basis for research that complies with the AEDC framework.

All facilities undertaking data linkage have been deemed to meet the minimum requirements for having capacity to undertake linkage and the procedures, protocols and infrastructure to maintain the privacy of the AEDC data. These facilities are provided with AEDC identified data (i.e. personal information) to link AEDC data in accordance with the AEDC Data Linkage Policy. Depending on the specific linkage mechanism utilised, Data Linkage Units may also be provided with de-identified AEDC data. However, to ensure the privacy of children, identified and de-identified AEDC data must be stored separately at all times and no individual can be allowed access to both datasets simultaneously.

Frequently asked questions

Will parents/carers get individual results for their child?

The AEDC is not like NAPLAN where individual reports are provided to parents/carers. For the AEDC, your child's data will be combined with data from the other children living within the same community. AEDC results for individual children are not reported and the AEDC is not used as an individual diagnostic tool. This means that an individual child report is not produced.

For further information about accessing your child's information please refer to: www.education.gov.au/about-department/resources/departement-education-guide-accessing-and-correcting-personal-information.

Can I have my child's information removed from the collection database?

It is open to you to withdraw consent for your child's participation in the AEDC at any point in time, by contacting your child's school. If you withdraw your consent during the AEDC data collection period, your child's information will be removed from the collection database.

If you withdraw your consent after the data collection period has ended, personal information about your child will not be further disclosed or used as part of the AEDC collection database. However, information about your child may already have been disclosed or reported to third parties before you withdrew your consent (e.g. deidentified information may have been published in the AEDC Report, or provided to a researcher).



It may not be possible to remove your child's information from that disclosed data, and it may continue to be used (but your child will not be individually identified in any reports).

Does my child have to be present when the teacher completes the AvEDI?

No. Teachers complete the **AvEDI** for children in their first year of full-time school. The AEDC questions are completed based on teachers' knowledge and observations of the children in their class. It is not a test and children are not required to be present while teachers complete the questions. When completing the AEDC, teachers may be supported by cultural consultants who are employees or contractors of your child's school and can contribute additional knowledge about the cultural context of First Nations children.

Is my child's information held securely?

Yes. The Department of Education is the custodian of the AEDC data and implements data collection techniques, storage and reporting technologies that ensure the reliability and security of the AEDC data.

Security rules (protocols) agreed between the Department of Education and all contracted service providers require protection against unauthorised access and accidental destruction and modification of AEDC data.

Can my child be identified?

The risk that your child could be re-identified from the AEDC de-identified dataset is minimal, because the dataset contains information about the majority of Australian children in their first year of school, and because the Department takes a number of steps to protect your child's information, including requesting that all service providers and users of AEDC apply stringent data security protocols. These measures are also applied to the de-identified data that may be disclosed to overseas research institutions.

Who do I contact if I have more questions about the privacy of my child's information or if I would like to make a complaint?

All enquiries and complaints about the privacy of AEDC information should be directed to the Department of Education in writing to aedc@education.gov.au. There is also a range of information on the AEDC available from the AEDC website www.aedc.gov.au.

The Department of Education has a [Privacy Policy](#) that is available on their website. The website also includes further information on how the Department of Education complies with the APPs, it also provides information about how you may make a complaint about a suspected breach of the APPs by the Department of Education or its contractors, and how the Department of Education deals with complaints.