

Data Interpretation Considerations and Limitations

Although information published by DDS in the Quarterly Client Characteristics Report is often used by media and research entities to develop statistics and draw conclusions, some of these findings may misrepresent the quarterly figures. The following information is provided to help users of the Quarterly Client Characteristics Report understand what changes in the numbers represent. When comparing numbers reported in one quarter to numbers reported in another quarter, the following factors should be considered.

Increases in the number of persons reported from one quarter to the next do not necessarily represent persons who are new to the DDS system. This is because:

- Individuals may not have a Client Development Evaluation Report (CDER) on file for months or even years after entering the system.
- Individuals who already have a CDER may have new data, including clinical data, entered at a later date.

Differences in the numbers from quarter to quarter reflect the net changes between individuals who are *newly reported* (i.e., included in the later report but not included in the earlier report) and individuals who *dropped out* (i.e., included in the earlier report but no longer included in the later report).

Newly reported may include:

- Individuals newly entering the system who have a CDER
- Individuals already active in the system who have a CDER in the current quarter but did not have a CDER in the prior quarter
- Individuals already in the system who have a CDER and active status¹ in the current quarter whose status was closed² or inactive³ in the prior quarter
- Individuals who had changes made to their CDER in the current quarter that resulted in them being reported under new categories

Dropped out may include:

- Individuals who were included in the prior quarter but are not included in the current quarter due to a change in status (e.g., from active status to inactive or closed status)
- Individuals who had changes made to their CDER in the current quarter that resulted in them no longer being reported under certain categories

In addition to the considerations noted above, individuals using DDS Quarterly Client Characteristics Report data for any type of trend analysis should be informed about the causes of increased CDER population numbers first reflected in the report for the quarter ending September 2002. Over 4,000 CDER records were added to the CDER database in July 2002 due to a revision in the information system transmission program and a change in DDS policy to include the records of CDERs not updated within the required three years of last report date. For more information, please read the page on "Changes to CDER Quarterly Reports" at www.dds.ca.gov/FactsStats/QuarterlyChanges.cfm.

¹Active status for purposes of the Quarterly Client Characteristics Report includes persons with CDERs who are currently being served by DDS in a State Developmental Center or in a community setting, including the home of parent.

²Closed status includes persons who moved out of state, died, were determined ineligible, or could not be located/chose not to continue pursuing eligibility determination.

³Inactive status includes persons who were determined eligible but currently do not want services.