Appendix C. NORS Dataset-Level Documentation

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) administers formula grants to states/territories under Title VII of the Older Americans Act (OAA). These grants fund state long-term care Ombudsman programs, which are responsible for identifying, investigating, and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents of nursing homes, board and care homes, assisted living facilities, and similar adult care facilities. These programs also work to bring about changes at the local, state, and national levels to improve long-term care.

Each year, all OAA Title VII grantees submit an annual performance report (APR) to ACL. The report includes data about resident cases and complaints, priority long-term systems issues identified by the program, organizational structure of the program and any conflicts of interest, long-term care facilities, program staff and volunteers, funding, and program activities. These data comprise the National Ombudsman Reporting System (NORS) dataset, one of many administrative and survey data collections on aging and disability programs overseen and managed by ACL.

The purpose of this appendix is to provide NORS dataset-level documentation as a resource and reference during the development of the data structure that connects ACL datasets and the future platform through which end users will access ACL data. The NORS dataset-level documentation includes an overview of the APR data collection and methodology, changes to the data collection over time, information management systems, data review and processing, key variables, and additional notes and resources. Additionally, NORS variable-level documentation is provided in the Excel Workbook entitled ACL DR II – Variable Level Documentation.xlsx, which includes information on all variables from all datasets considered in the ACL DR II project.

Overview of NORS APR Data Collection and Methodology

The purpose of the NORS APR data collection is to help track and evaluate program performance, understand long-term care resident experiences and problems, and capture changes in long-term services and support, policies, and practices. These data are used, in part, to measure program outputs (e.g., number of complaints, number of Ombudsman consultations) and assess performance against program outcome measures (e.g., decrease the number of complaints not resolved to the satisfaction of the resident).

The NORS APR used for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 consists of 91 items[1] and is organized into nine major sections: Cases and Complaints, Complaint Examples, Systems Issues, Organizational Structure, Staff and Volunteers, Organizational Conflicts of Interest, Funds Expended, Facility, and Program Activities. Table 1 below provides further details on each section:

Table 1: NORS APR

Section of APR	Number of Items	Type(s) of Data Collected
Cases and Complaints	13	Numeric
Complaint Examples	6	Numeric, Text
Systems Issues	9	Numeric, Text
Organizational Structure	4	Numeric

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[1] This is the minimum number of items, including optional items.

Section of APR	Number of Items	Type(s) of Data Collected
Staff and Volunteers	10	Numeric
Organizational Conflicts of Interest	4	Numeric, Text
Funds Expended	14	Numeric, Text
Facility	8	Numeric, Text
Program Activities	23	Numeric, Text

The NORS APR is an annual administrative data collection. All grantees are required to submit data covering an annual reporting period of October 1 to September 30. OAA Title VII grantees have until January 31 of the following calendar year to prepare and submit the data to ACL. Then ACL staff conduct reviews, request any corrections, and typically certify the complete grantee APR data by March 31.

Additional resources that provide detailed explanation of the NORS APR are listed and described in Table 2 below. Older Americans Act Performance System (OAAPS) files can be downloaded from the following website: https://oaaps.acl.gov/app/Resources/refMaterials. File names and versions may change.

Table 2: **Additional Resources – NORS APR**

File Name	Description	Location
ResTechDoc_VIITbl1CaseLevels.pdf	Provides the codes, definitions, examples, and reporting tips for case data requirements	OAAPS
ResTechDoc_VIITbl2ComplaintCodes.pdf	Provides the codes, definitions, examples, and reporting tips for complaint codes	OAAPS
ResTechDoc_VIITbl3PrgInfo.pdf	Provides the codes, definitions, examples, and reporting tips for statewide program information and activities	OAAPS
ACL_Title_VII_Data_Validations.pdf	Describes the business rules enforced for each variable and when the validations take place	OAAPS

Major Changes in NORS APR Data Collection and Availability, 2010–2020

Annual NORS APR data are available for public access from the AGing, Independence, and Disability (AGID) Program Data Portal (https://agid.acl.gov/) for the years 2000 to 2018.[2] The APR data collection form was essentially the same during this time period but transitioned from the so-called legacy APR to a new form, the current APR, in FFY 2020. Beginning with the reporting period of October 1, 2019, to September 31, 2020, all grantees recorded their NORS data using the current APR form. ACL data restructuring efforts will use the NORS APR data formatted according to the current APR.

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[2] The ACL DR II project will be conducted from September 25, 2019 to September 24, 2021. The project incorporates NORS APR data for 2010 to 2018; 2019 data were released on December 2, 2020; 2020 data will be available in spring 2021.

Additional resources that provide detailed explanation of the legacy to current NORS APR revisions are listed and described in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Additional Resources – Legacy to Current NORS APR Revisions

File Name	Description	Location
ResTechDoc_VIICrosswalkANorsOverview.pdf	Crosswalk of NORS legacy APR to current APR	OAAPS
ResTechDoc_VIICrosswalkBComplaintCodes.pdf	Crosswalk of NORS legacy APR complaint codes to current APR complaint codes	OAAPS
ACL DR II – Crosswalk Review.xlsx	Review and comment on crosswalk and revisions from legacy APR to current APR for OAA Title III, VI, and VII	ACL DR II Project Files
ResTechDoc_VIIIntroNorsRevs.pdf	Lists variables and describes shift from aggregated (legacy approach) to case-level (current/revised approach) data collection for NORS case and complaint data.	OAAPS

Note: OAAPS files can be downloaded from the following website: https://oaaps.acl.gov/app/Resources/refMaterials. File names and versions may change.

Description of NORS APR Data Submission, Information Management System, and Final Datafiles

Historically, grantees have submitted NORS APR data to ACL through the Ombudsman Reporting Tool. As the NORS APR shifts from the legacy to the current version, the information management system for NORS APR data is also changing. The replacement system, called OAAPS, is the new data submission portal for OAA Title III, Title VI, and Title VII grantees to report annual performance data. Additionally, OAAPS offers a range of tools and features that support data processes, including validating data submissions, checking and highlighting year-to-year variances, reviewing and approving data submissions, exporting data, and producing analysis reports.

The current APR for NORS went into effect on October 1, 2019, for the FFY 2020 reporting period. OAAPS is open for use by Ombudsman programs. State Ombudsman program submissions are a combination of required data uploads of cases and complaints, optional data uploads of numeric program activities, and narrative manual entry. Ombudsman programs upload datafiles that match the prescribed OAAPS templates, in a valid file format (CSV, XLSX, XML).

All legacy APR data for NORS since 2009 have been formatted according to the current APR and loaded into OAAPS. Single-year and multiyear NORS APR datafiles can be exported from OAAPS into Microsoft Excel. These OAAPS-formatted datafiles contain 11 variables. Each variable is listed and described in Table 4 below, which also includes an indication of which variables can be used together to uniquely identify records or serve as keys for relating NORS data with other datasets.

Table 4: **NORS APR Datafile Variable List**

Variable Name	Unique ID/Key	Description
FiscalYear	Yes	Fiscal year of the NORS APR, used to determine the time period represented in the variable
GeoID[3]	Yes	Geographic identifier, used to determine the geographic area represented in the variable (Grantee Entity, State, Census Division, ACL Region, Census Region, or National)
Component	No	Short title for section of the NORS APR containing the variable
ACLRefNumber	Yes	Combination letter and numeric code to uniquely identify the NORS APR item corresponding to the variable
SectionName	No	Long title for section of the NORS APR containing the variable
Field	No	Short title for variable
FieldLabel	No	Long title for variable
Type	No	Format type for variable (numeric, currency, or text)
NumericValue	No	Value of variable, if numeric formatted
CurrencyValue	No	Value of variable, if currency formatted
NonNumericValue	No	Value of variable, if text formatted

Additional resources that provide detailed explanation of OAAPS, including tools, features, and OAAPS formatted NORS, data are listed and described in Table 5 below.

Table 5: **Additional NORS APR Resources – OAAPS**

File Name	Description	Location
ACL_Title_VII_Sample_CC_Guide.pdf	Explains how to use an approved upload template to submit cases and complaints data into OAAPS	OAAPS
ACL_Title_VII_Non_CC_Sample_Guide.pdf	Explains how to use an approved upload template to submit non cases and complaints data in OAAPS	OAAPS
OAAPS_Title_VII_User_Guide.pdf	Provides comprehensive information and instructions on OAAPS system, including user management, data reporting and submission, data review, and analysis reports	OAAPS

Note: OAAPS files can be downloaded from the following website:
https://oaaps.acl.gov/app/Resources/refMaterials. File names and versions may change.

Feasibility and Validity of Merging NORS APR Data

NORS APR data can be validly merged within each year, across years, and across some datasets.

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[3] Not available from OAAPS formatted datafiles. Constructed in the ACL Data Restructuring project to test technical and conceptual linkages within and across datasets. Based on GeoID variable in constructed files uploaded to AGID. Replaces the Org variable produced by OAAPS.

Feasibility of Merging NORS APR Data Within Each Year

OAAPS formatting provides all NORS APR data within a single datafile. The data are not organized into separate datafiles that would require merging within each year.

Feasibility of Merging NORS APR Data Across Years

OAAPS formatting allows for all years of NORS APR data to be appended together. Single-year and multiyear datafiles can be downloaded from OAAPS into Microsoft Excel. The constructed GeoID variable includes all states/territories and can be used with the FiscalYear variable to validly link grantee data over time.

Feasibility of Merging NORS APR Data Across Datasets

The NORS APR data can technically link[4] with other datasets at the state/territory geographic level. It is also valid to aggregate the data to technically link with other ACL and U.S. Census Bureau datasets at the following geographic levels: Census Division, ACL Region, Census Region, and National.

Additionally, the NORS dataset includes information that can be conceptually linked[5] with SPR and Title VI. For more detailed information on available conceptual linkages, please see the resources listed and described in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Additional Resources – NORS Conceptual Linkages

File Name	Description	Location
ACL DR II – Aligning Measures Spreadsheets.xlsx	The SPR-NORS worksheet lists and describes conceptual linkages between NORS and SPR.	ACL DR II Project Files
ACL DR II – Aligning Measures Spreadsheets.xlsx	The Title VI-NORS worksheet lists and describes conceptual linkages between NORS and Title VI.	ACL DR II Project Files

Note: OAAPS files can be downloaded from the following website: https://oaaps.acl.gov/app/Resources/refMaterials. File names and versions may change.

Schema for NORS Dataset

The NORS schema in **Error! Reference source not found.** 7 below shows the datafile structure for NORS APR datafiles exported from OAAPS. The NORS schema shows the available variables for NORS APR data. Key variables are bolded to signify that they are used to technically link NORS APR data to other datasets (i.e., on the basis of geography, using 1.1 GeoID, and of time, using 1.2 Year). For convenience, the variables needed for technical linkages are listed first in the NORS schema, followed by other variables found in the dataset. Each dataset and each variable included in the ACL DR II project is assigned a number. The purpose of numbering each dataset and variable is to help to account for all the datasets and variables to be included in the database for cross-dataset analysis. The order and the magnitude of

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[4] Technical linkages exist between data that match across datasets on the basis of time and geography. A data user might be interested, for example, in using technical linkages to produce a report about all OAA programs and services in their state using the most recently available year of data.

[5] Conceptual linkages exist between data that match on the basis of time and geography but also on the basis of subject area and measurement (e.g., variable definition, variable category, method of data collection). A data user might be interested, for example, in using conceptual linkages between common variables in NORS and Title VI to examine staffing (e.g., total count of full-time and part-time staff paid using grant funds).

the numbering does not have any meaning. The numbering is used only to track all datasets and variables and can easily scale to include additional datasets and variables that may be added in the future. Table 6 above provides a description of each NORS variable.

Table 7 presents conceptual linkages between NORS APR data and other datasets that match on the basis of geography and time as well as on the basis of subject area and measurement. Broad subject areas are listed in the Topic column, while datasets in which these conceptual linkages can be made with NORS APR data are listed in the Dataset(s) column. Specific subtopics in NORS APR data that conceptually link with other datasets are shown as bulleted lists under each main topic, when available. These subtopics provide an additional level of detail not shown in Exhibit 3: Overall Schema of the ACL DR II project final report entitled ACL DR II - Final Report 9-20-2021.docx.

Table 7 is designed to provide a quick view of the conceptual linkages between NORS APR data and other datasets. For detailed information on conceptual linkages between NORS APR data and other datasets, refer to the resources listed in Table 6: Additional Resources – NORS Conceptual Linkages.

Table 7: NORS Schema

3.0 NORS
3.1 GeoID
3.2 Year
3.3 Org
3.4 Component
3.5 ACLRefNumber
3.6 SectionName
3.7 Field
3.8 FieldLabel
3.9 Type
3.10 NumericValue
3.11 CurrencyValue
3.12 NonNumericValue

Topic	Dataset(s)
Total Expenditures	
- Total Expenditures	SPR, Title VI

Additional Notes, Considerations, and Key Resources for NORS

For further information on the OAA Title VII grant program and NORS APR data, refer to these resources:

- *Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program*: https://acl.gov/programs/Protecting-Rights-and-Preventing-Abuse/Long-term-Care-Ombudsman-Program

- *The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center*: https://ltcombudsman.org/

- *AGing, Independence, and Disability (AGID) Program Data Portal*: https://agid.acl.gov/