

## STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS AIRS/211 LA COUNTY TAXONOMY OF HUMAN SERVICES

When the Taxonomy was first created, 211 LA County (previously INFO LINE of Los Angeles) had specific goals that guided its development. As a result, the Taxonomy:

- ✓ Is comprehensive with a logical niche for every concept.
- ✓ Incorporates terminology accepted in the field.
- ✓ Contains terms that are clearly named, defined and cross-referenced.
- ✓ Differentiates between the services agencies provide and the target populations they serve, avoiding the common classification pitfall of splitting services which are essentially the same only on the basis of the different groups that utilize them.
- ✓ Begins with the perspective of how services are delivered rather than the funding streams they follow, the goals they are trying to achieve, the problems they attempt to resolve or the organizational structure through which they are delivered.
- ✓ Structures terms in a hierarchical arrangement with mutually exclusive categories, making the logical relationship between terms an integral part of its structure and supporting easier and more flexible indexing and retrieval once the structure is understood.
- ✓ Has a flexible structure which permits growth and change as the human services delivery system evolves.
- ✓ Can be customized to meet the unique needs of communities.
- ✓ Is designed specifically for an automated environment.

The Taxonomy contains nearly 9,000 terms that are organized into a hierarchical structure that shows the relationships among terms. There are ten basic service categories with a separate section for target populations or beneficiaries:

- **Basic Needs**
- **Consumer Services**
- **Criminal Justice and Legal Services**
- **Education**
- **Environmental Quality**
- **Health Care**
- **Income Support and Employment**
- **Individual and Family Life**
- **Mental Health Care and Counseling**
- **Organizational/Community/International Services**
- **Target Populations**

Each concept is broken down into up to six increasingly specific levels. Not all sections include six levels. Some may, for example, have only two, three or four. The following example under *Health Care* illustrates the hierarchical arrangement:

<b>Level I</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Health Care</b>
<b>Level II</b>	<b>LR</b>	<b>Rehabilitation</b>
<b>Level III</b>	<b>LR-8000</b>	<b>Speech and Hearing</b>
<b>Level IV</b>	<b>LR-8000.0500</b>	<b>Audiology</b>
<b>Level V</b>	<b>LR-8000.0500-800</b>	<b>Sign Language Instruction</b>
<b>Level VI</b>	<b>LR-8000.0500-800.05</b>	<b>American Sign Language</b>

### Types of Terms (Facets)

The *Taxonomy* is what is known as a faceted index. It contains a number of different types of terms which allow you to accomplish different things with your indexing. Types of terms include:

- Services
  - Home Delivered Meals
  - Money Management
  - Crime Prevention
  - Adoption Services
- Organization/Facility Type
  - Adult Schools
  - Hospitals
  - Senior Centers
  - Human Rights Groups
- Modality/Delivery Format
  - Legal Counseling
  - Legal Representation
  - Group Counseling
  - Organizational Training Services
- Orientation/Philosophy (not a formal facet)
  - Gestalt Therapy
  - Feminist Organization Perspective
- Major Programs
  - WIC
  - Social Security Disability
  - AmeriCorp
  - RSVP Programs
- Target Populations/Beneficiaries
  - Older Adults
  - Developmental Disabilities
  - Victims/Survivors
  - Homeless Families

The majority of the terms in the Taxonomy represent services, and these are the terms you will use most frequently. There are, however, occasions on which you will want to do something different.

**Service:** Service indexing allows you to specify in detail what an organization DOES.

**Organization/Facility Type:** Organization/facility type indexing allows you to specify what an organization IS. It permits you to choose one simple term to index an agency instead of (or in addition to) listing all of the different services the agency offers. If you are indexing your local senior center, for example, you can use the facility type term *Senior Centers* rather than listing all of the individuals services available at the center. Organizational/facility type terms provide a particularly effective way to generate comprehensive lists of hospitals, adult schools or other types of organizations. Service searches cannot do this with any degree of certainty. Most adult schools offer ESL classes, for example, but some may not. Conversely, ESL classes may be available through other types of organizations, e.g., immigrant mutual assistance associations. The only way to be sure you have a complete list of adult schools is to conduct a search using the term *Adult Schools*.

**Modality/Delivery Mode:** The modality terms provide information about HOW a service is provided rather than the nature of the service itself. For example, you can search for programs that help people who are seeking a divorce and distinguish between those that provide legal counseling, mediation or actual representation in court. Modality terms are not intended to stand alone. Rather they are designed to be used as modifiers for areas of specialization and should be linked to appropriate service terms in a record. If an organization provides legal counseling for people seeking a divorce, the Taxonomy link would read: *Legal Counseling \* Divorce Assistance*. If linking is impossible, you may want to consider omitting the modalities. It is more important to know that an organization provides specific types of family law, for example, than it is to know that they provide counseling as opposed to representation. The following sections include terms for modalities:

- Legal Assistance Modalities (e.g., counseling, representation, mediation)
- Assistive Technology Provision Options (e.g., loan, rental, sales)
- Counseling Settings (e.g., individual, group, family)
- Organizational Development and Management Delivery Methods (e.g., technical assistance, training, outsourcing.)

**Named Programs:** Some Taxonomy terms carry the formal name by which particular programs (mostly those at the federal level) are generally known to professionals and end users alike, e.g., Medicaid, TANF.

**Target Population:** The very last section of the Taxonomy contains target population terms which indicate the people for whom services are designed, the WHO facet. Virtually any type of service can

focus on any particular target group, making it impractical to try to have a separate service/target population term for every possible combination. Having a separate list of target population concepts allows users to choose any service term and combine it with any target group term in the agency record. People can then search by the combined service/target term (to access, for example, job training programs that target people with developmental disabilities), by the service term alone (to access all agencies that provide job training, regardless of target population focus), or by target group alone (to find agencies that provide any type of service aimed at people with developmental disabilities). The target population section also includes topical identifiers/issues, very general terms such as *Aging Issues*, *Child Abuse Issues*, *Drug Abuse Issues*, and *Legal Issues* that allow users to modify broad service concepts (e.g., *Speakers/ Speakers Bureaus* or *Directory Publication*) that might otherwise be very vague. The availability of target population terms provides a great deal of flexibility in the indexing process.

### Elements in the Taxonomy

- **Term Identification Numbers (Codes):** The alphanumeric codes mark the place and level of terms within the hierarchy. The computer has no way of knowing that *Rehabilitation* has anything to do with *Health Care* or that *Speech and Hearing* is a subset of *Rehabilitation*. But it can readily tell that *LR-8000* is a subset of *LR* and that *LR* is, in turn, a subset of *L*. The ID numbers, not the terms, create the logic of the hierarchy. They also make it possible to produce summary level reports. Space has been left in the lettering/numbering scheme to permit growth.
- **Term Names:** The term names indicate the preferred wording for service concepts in the hierarchical display. An effort is made to select clear, unambiguous wording that accurately describes the service each term represents and to use terminology that is accepted in the field.
- **Definitions:** Definitions are provided for all terms and serve as a touchstone to ensure that different people are using terms the same way. They are descriptive of the way services are provided not prescriptive for what services ought to be. Definitions are not a substitute for service narratives. Different organizations may offer the same service in different ways. The service narrative needs to describe these individual differences.

Sample Definition: **Street Outreach Programs:** Programs that are staffed by outreach workers who spend time with people who live on the street, build relationships with them, identify and address their immediate needs (e.g., crisis intervention, food, clean clothing, hygiene kits, blankets, someone to listen) and provide information about and linkage to longer-term forms of support such as shelter, counseling, drug and alcohol detoxification and rehabilitation, care/case management and, where applicable, family reunification services. Street outreach programs may be staffed by volunteers or peers who were formerly homeless; and may target special populations such as homeless youth at risk for sexual abuse or exploitation, veterans, or people with specific medical or mental health conditions or be available to the larger homeless population.

- **See Also References:** See also references identify related terms in other parts of the hierarchy. They help to assure that indexers and searchers have found the most appropriate term. There is a see also reference from *Emergency Food* in the *Basic Needs* section to *Christmas Baskets* and *Thanksgiving Baskets* in the *Holiday Programs* section, for example, because although the main purpose of holiday baskets is to help people celebrate and enjoy the holiday season, the contents are primarily food. Some users may look for the holiday baskets in the food section. The reference points them in the right direction.
- **Use References:** Use references are synonyms for preferred terms in the hierarchy. They help to accommodate regional differences in the language and facilitate common language word/phrase searches using alternative terminology. There are more than 10,000 use references in the *Taxonomy*. *Child Guidance*, for example, is a term in the *Specialized Counseling* section. Use references for *Child Guidance* include *Child Counseling*, *Child Psychiatry*, *Paediatric*

*Psychiatry* and *Pediatric Psychiatry*. People searching for child guidance programs should be able to find them using the preferred term or any of its associated use references.

- **Facet:** Each Taxonomy term is assigned to one of five facets which capture its intended use. The facets are: Service, Target, Organization/Facility Type, Modality and Named Program.
- **Bibliographic References:** Bibliographic References list source material for Taxonomy definitions and structure. The following are the references that were used when researching Intergenerational Programs (PS-3300):

“Defining Intergenerational Programming”, Copyright (2000 or subsequent years), Generations United. Reprinted with permission of Generations United (<http://www.gu.org>).

“Generations United”, Statement Submitted to The United States Environmental Protection Agency, May 7, 2003 Listening Session, Generations United, 122 C Street, Ste. 820, NW, Washington DC, 20001, [http://www.epa.gov/aging/listening/2003/pdf/balt\\_dbutts.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/aging/listening/2003/pdf/balt_dbutts.pdf)

“Senior Volunteer and Intergenerational Programs”, Helpguide.org Web site, [http://www.helpguide.org/life/senior\\_volunteer\\_intergenerational\\_programs.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/senior_volunteer_intergenerational_programs.htm)

- **Comments:** The comments field provides information about a term including tips for indexers about how a term should be used or help in distinguishing the term from others that may be similar. Below is the comment for *Disability Related Support Groups* (PH-5000.1800):

“Modify this term using disability related target population terms in the Diseases/Disabilities section. Applicable categories include Communication Impairments, Developmental Disabilities, Frail Elderly, Functional Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Learning Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, Physical Disabilities and Visual Disabilities.”

### Additional Special Features

**Related Concepts:** Many organizations are accustomed to a classification system whose primary method of organization is by target group focus or problem: services for seniors, people who have disabilities, people who are homeless and so forth. These users may be disoriented by a taxonomy that is structured primarily by services. We have developed a set of target group/problems and connected them with Taxonomy terms for services that are typically associated with those groups. A special search has been devised that allows subscribers to choose a particular related concept term and display associated services. Example: most services for people who are homeless do not include the word *homeless*. There are, of course a few including: *Homeless Drop In Centers, Homeless Shelter, Homeless Advocacy Groups*. Many other services for this population do not including: *Baggage Check Facilities, Bathing Facilities, Day Shelters, Public Restrooms* and *Street Outreach Programs*, all terms in different sections of the Taxonomy. Having access to the related concepts categories allows users to choose to look at the Taxonomy through a different lens.

**External System Crosswalks:** 211 LA County has crosswalked the Taxonomy to three other classification structures: *UWASIS* which was published by United Way of America and is now out of print, the *National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE)*, published by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) at the Urban Institute and the *Nonprofit Program Classification System (NPC)*, also published by NCCS. Subscribers have access to an external systems search which allows them to select an external system and a term within that system, and see associated Taxonomy terms. The terms are organized alphabetically by Taxonomy term name but can be reordered by code by clicking on "Code" on the match list title bar. To see the definition and other associated information about the Taxonomy term, users can click on the term name.

**U.S. and Canadian Locales:** There are two versions (locales) of the Taxonomy: one that includes terms and definitions that are appropriate for users in the United States and another that has been

configured for use in Canada. Although the majority of terms can be used in both countries and share all data elements, there are variations in term names, definitions and use references that are accounted for in the two locales. In addition, there are a number of individual services that are only available in one country or the other; and large service systems like the courts and public assistance programs vary enough that separate sections are required in each locale for adequate representation. There are also separate Taxonomy reports under the Print tab on the Web site and separate download files for each of the locales. A Canadian French locale will be added later in 2008.