



*Helping People,  
Changing Lives.*

# Best Practices Data Entry for Minnesota CAP Agencies

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**Anoka County Community Action Programs**  
**Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency**  
**Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc.**  
**Community Action Duluth**  
**Community Action of Minneapolis**  
**CAP of Ramsey and Washington Counties**  
**CAP of Suburban Hennepin**  
**Heartland Community Action Agency**  
**Inter-County Community Council**  
**KOOTASCA Community Action**  
**Lakes and Pines Community Action Council**  
**Lake & Prairies Community Action Partnership**  
**Mahube Community Council**  
**Minnesota Valley Action Council Northwest Community Action**  
**Olmsted Community Action Program**  
**Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council**  
**Prairie Five Community Action Council**  
**Scott-Carver-Dakota CAP Agency**  
**Semcac**  
**Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council**  
**Three Rivers Community Action**  
**Tri-County Action Program**  
**Tri-County Community Action, Inc.**  
**Tri-Valley Opportunity Council**  
**West Central Minnesota Communities Action**  
**Western Community Action**  
**Wright County Community Action**

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## INTRODUCTION

Having a data entry standard adopted State-wide would allow many of the currently used databases to become more portable on how data is handled. Adopting a data standard will make data that is entered into databases transition to newer databases and merging data into another database for additional reporting and aid in service delivery for served clients. The data is already being entered one time, the possibility of merging or moving data into other systems that agencies are using will save time and should be considered as a cost savings of staff hired to enter the data. These simplified data standards will save time and eliminates time with data entry for many agencies.

Different databases allow for interpretation in the way that data is entered. The best practice manual is a recommendation to standardize the way that all MN Agencies enter data into their databases making data exports and imports more compatible for combining into another database system.

Regardless of what database Agencies use for collecting client data, searching for an existing client in a database is always a must. It is very easy because if misspellings that two families can be in the same system twice or more, therefore having duplicated households in the agencies databases.

## CLIENT INFORMATION ENTRY

***First Name:*** Enter Legal First Name – Enter the name as the client writes it. If it looks like a nick name ask.

***Middle Name:*** First Initial with no period is acceptable

***Last Name:*** Enter complete legal Last Name. How to enter multiple last names:

- Hyphenated Example: Flintstone-Rubble
- Rule: Always capitalize both names and enter them both in the 'Last Name' space provided.
- Rule: Some names are hyphenated and some are not. Enter the name as the client writes it.
- Rule: Do not put a space after the hyphen
- Non-Hyphenated Example: Flintstone Rubble
- Rule: Always put one space between the two last names.
- Rule: Always capitalize both names and enter them both in the 'Last Name' space provided.
- Name with Prefixes: Example "McDonald" enter the name with the Capitals but no space.
- Names with specific punctuation: Example "De' La Rosa" enter the name with the punctuation and Caps but no spaces.

***Suffix:*** Only use a suffix if there is a specific field for the suffix. If the child is a Jr then the Date of Birth and the relationship will signify that they are a junior. When using the suffix field use Jr or Sr no periods.

***Date of Birth(DOB):*** Most DOB's entered into client information databases are usually mandatory. Get the correct DOB from the client. If they have to call back with the information or the Case Manager has to follow up with the client. You can let the client know that the application has to have the correct DOB. To continue on in the application the case manager will be able to use the age of the child to enter a birth year and the use 01/01. This will allow you to finish taking the application. Again get the correct DOB; this will be an identifier in any future data transfer from one data source to the next.

***Social Security Numbers:*** Should be entered in the following format 000-00-000. If the client is willing to give you a full SSN that would be ideal, however, if you can get at least a partial SSN of the last 4 digits that is also acceptable.

## CLIENT ADDRESS ENTRY

### Street and Avenue Entries:

Both the columns below are acceptable for data entry. Use **No** punctuation. Omit or take out any existing periods and commas throughout the clients address information.

Avenue	AVE
Boulevard	BLVD
Circle	CIR
County	CO
Court	CT
Crescent	CRES
Curve	CURV
Drive	DR
Highway	HWY
Lane	LN
Parkway	PKWY
Place	PL
Point	PT
Road	RD
Street	ST
Terrace	TER
Trail	TRL
Way	WAY

### Directional

Following entries are Acceptable for data entry:

North	N	NE	NW
East	E		
South	S	SE	SW
West	W		

### Numbering for street names

1<sup>st</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>

4<sup>th</sup>

Etc.

Full street address guidelines by implementing the above information.

Example of best practice guideline is: 145 2<sup>nd</sup> AVE NE and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, **do not** use 145 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave or 145 NE Second Ave. For spacing enter one space between the street and the direction.

Apartment/Suite/Unit numbers: do not use the # sign. Use digits followed immediately by an Upper Case Letter. Example Lot 8F or Apt 8E

Zip Code: If the client does not know the zip code, look it up. As a rule all Minnesota phone books have a listing of zip codes. The zip code can also be looked up via an internet search.

**Special Note:** Uppercase/lowercase usage: All data entry should be done in upper/lower case (Title case) and not ALL CAPS.

### Identifying Data systems that use the same client Data

If you can identify a few database systems that have the same data in them and the Agency could benefit by exporting the client data and importing it to another database. It may be a beneficial cost savings for the Agency to get a system in place to take information from one system to another.