Chapter 22: Follow-back

In SEER*DMS, the term "follow-back" refers to the process of contacting a reporting facility to obtain missing information or to resolve inconsistencies in data received at the registry. In contrast, the term "follow-up" refers to the surveillance processes used to gather new information about a patient regarding treatment outcomes and survival.

While editing, screening, or consolidating data, it may be determined that additional information must be obtained from a reporting facility. An editor can submit a request for follow-back information while they are editing data. The request will be forwarded to the Follow-back Management tool for processing; and it will be maintained with the record or patient set to enable users to review all follow-back inquiries and responses associated with a record or patient set. In some automatic tasks, a request for follow-back information is auto-created when SEER*DMS detects that required data are missing.

The Follow-back Management tool provides a convenient method for processing the follow-back inquiries in batches. Periodically, a registry manager will review, edit, and compile the requests into a single communiqué that is sent to a physician or other representative at a facility. Once a response is received, registry policy will determine whether one staff member is responsible for processing the information, or if the information is distributed to the staff members who submitted the individual requests.

In this chapter, you'll learn about

- Understanding Follow-back
- Follow-back Needs Created in Automatic Tasks
- Manually Adding a Follow-back Need
- Searching for a Follow-back Bundle
- Reviewing and Sending Follow-back
- Processing a Follow-back Response
- Assigning a Follow-back Need to another Facility
- Re-querying a Facility

Understanding Follow-back

The following describes the mechanisms used by SEER*DMS to facilitate follow-back processes.

Follow-back Need: In SEER*DMS, a request for follow-back information is entered and tracked as a "follow-back need". A follow-back need can be defined manually while editing, screening, or consolidating data; or it may be created automatically if SEER*DMS detects that required information is missing (this process is indicated as an automatic "Add Follow-back" task on the workflow diagram). To allow for batch processing of requests, SEER*DMS creates groups or "bundles" of requests designated for the same facility. There are two status settings for follow-back needs:

1. **Open** – The need is in a bundle that has not been sent, or it has been sent but the response has not been processed. This status may also be displayed as:
    - **Open (Reassigned)** – This status indicates that the need was assigned to a bundle for another facility after its original bundle was sent. Therefore, it may be sent in both bundles and, therefore, can be tracked in both.

Open (Re-queried) – The follow-back need was sent in a bundle but the issue was not addressed in the facility's response. It is being resent to the same facility in a different bundle. It will be maintained in both bundles for tracking purposes.

2. **Closed** – The status of the follow-back need was set to closed after a response was received and processed by a manager. Alternatively, a manager may have determined that the inquiry is not necessary and closed the issue (needs closed in this manner are removed from the bundle). This status may also be displayed as:
   - **Closed (Reassigned)** – An open need was assigned to another facility and subsequently closed (it may have been closed in either bundle).
   - **Closed (Re-queried)** – A need was sent but the issue was not addressed in the facility's response. Therefore, it was assigned to a bundle for the same facility (so that it could be resent). Subsequently, the need was closed.

Follow-back Bundle: A set of follow-back needs intended for a single facility and processed as a group. As needs are created, they are added to a bundle and held for processing. The manager of follow-back periodically reviews, edits, and sends the group to the designated organization. There are three status settings for bundles:

1. **Open** – It has not yet been sent. Other needs for the same organization may be added.

2. **Waiting** – The bundle has been sent but a response has not been received.

3. **Closed** – A manager closed the bundle, or it was automatically closed when all of the individual needs were closed.

Follow-back Needs Created in Automatic Tasks

The final process in the SEER*DMS workflow involves automated checks of the patient set data. SEERDMS checks the patient set to determine if a follow-back need should be created based on registry specific criteria. For example, in some registry configurations, a follow-back need is auto-generated if the date of diagnosis is missing. In this case, the request for follow-back information may be directed to the diagnosing physician to obtain the date. When a follow-back is auto-created, it may be directed to a physician or a facility. To determine whether follow-back needs are auto-generated in your registry's system, please refer to the *SEER*DMS Technical Reference: Registry-Specific Information*.

Manually Adding a Follow-back Need

Requires system permission: *fb_initiate*

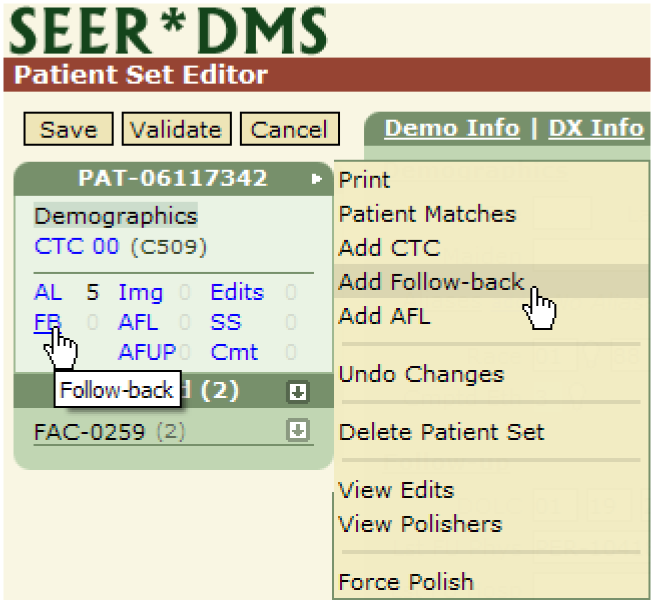
While editing, screening, matching, or consolidating data, you may determine that additional information must be obtained from a reporting facility. Submit a request for follow-back information by adding a "follow-back need".

To request follow-back information while completing a Match-Consolidate task or editing data:

1. To initiate a request for follow-back information:

   a. If data fields required to complete a Match-Consolidate task are missing or incomplete, click the **Follow-back** button provided at the bottom of the Incoming Record section. Continue with step 2 of these instructions.

b. If you would like to submit a request for follow-back information when editing a record or patient set, click the **FB** link in the navigation box and then click **Add Follow-back**. Alternatively, you may select **Add Follow-back** directly from the menu. (The patient set navigation and menu are used as an example in the figure below. The FB link and Add Follow-back menu item are also available when editing a record.)



i. Click the **FB** link to review other follow-back issues related to this record or patient set. You will then be allowed to submit a new request by clicking **Add Follow-back**. Alternatively, you can go directly to the follow-back form from the data editor by selecting **Add Follow-back** from the menu.

ii. Note: you will not be able to add follow-back when creating a new patient set; the patient set must be saved and a patient set ID must be assigned.

2. The Add Follow-back popup will be displayed. You may drag the popup to the side if you wish to refer to data items on the screen as you submit the follow-back need.

3. Use the lookup to specify the appropriate facility in the **Facility** field.

4. Follow-back inquiries may be addressed to a representative of the organization or directly to a physician. To direct your question to a physician, use the lookup to select the **Physician**. If no physician is specified, a registry manager will select the appropriate organization representative as they process and send this question with others for the same organization.

5. If appropriate, create a list of data fields related to this follow-back need. The field names will be listed in the communication to the facility.

a. Click on an item in the **Available Data Items** box. Use the right arrow -->> to move your choice to the **Selected Data Items** box. To remove a data field, click on an item in the Selected Data Items box and click the left arrow <<--.

b. If selecting more than one data item in either list, use standard Windows techniques to multi-select.

6. Enter text in the **Question** field. This text will be included in the draft letter or fax that is prepared. A registry manager may review and edit the draft prior to sending it to the facility.

7. Enter **Comments** that you wish to make available to SEER*DMS users reviewing this need. These comments will not be included in the communication sent to the facility.

8. Select an **Urgency** level. Normal is the default value. The urgency level of the bundle is set to the highest level of any need. You may use this field to prioritize the processing of follow-back needs and bundles.

9. Click **Save** to submit the follow-back need and return to the record editor, patient set editor, or Match-Consolidate task.

10. If possible, complete the current worklist task. If the requested information is required to complete the task, save any changes that you have made but do not forward the data to the next workflow task (specific instructions for saving data and exiting the task are provided in the task-specific chapters of this manual).

Periodically, a manager will review, edit, and send a batch of follow-back requests to a physician or other representative at a facility. Subsequently, the manager will process the facility's responses. SEER*DMS will automatically notify you when a response from the facility has been received and processed, that is, when your follow-back need is closed by a manager.

You or another staff member may update data fields based on the new information. As determined by registry policy, one staff member may be responsible for processing all follow-back responses, or the information may be given directly to the staff members who entered the follow-back needs.

If you suspended a task pending the receipt of follow-back information, you must re-open and complete the task to allow the data to move forward in the workflow. You must either make changes to data fields based on the new information or verify that the appropriate changes were made. If you completed the task but need to update the record or patient set with the new information, use the Patient Lookup to search for the data (see *Chapter 20: Searching for Records and Patients*).

Searching for a Follow-back Bundle

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

Use the Follow-back Manager to locate a follow-back bundle so that you may review and edit the needs, send the query, or process information sent by a reporting facility.

To find a follow-back bundle:

1. Select **Manage** > **Follow-back.**

2. By default, the **Follow-back Manager** displays *Open* bundles and bundles with a status of *Waiting for Response*. To search for a bundle with a specific status, select that status in the **Bundle Status** filter.

3. If you know the ID of the follow-back bundle, enter it in the **Bundle ID(s)** field.

4. Use the **Source** filter to find a bundle assigned to a specific organization. Enter a full or partial facility ID or use the  icon to search for a facility by name.

5. Use the **Sent to** filter to find a bundle addressed to a particular organization representative. Enter an ID, or use the icon to select the organization representative.

6. To search for a bundle sent or closed during a specific time period, enter dates into the **Sent** or **Closed** filters. Enter all dates in *MM-DD-YYYY* format, or use the Calendar feature to select a date.

7. Click **Apply**.

8. To sort the list by the data in any column, click on the underlined column heading. To reverse the sort order, click the column heading again. An arrow to the right of the header indicates the current sort order.

9. To revert the filter settings to their default values, click **Reset**.

Reviewing and Sending Follow-back

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

Prior to sending a follow-back bundle, you should review each follow-back need to verify that it is being sent to the appropriate source and that all necessary information is included.

To review and send needs in an open follow-back bundle:

1. Follow the steps in the *Searching for a Follow-back Bundle* section of this chapter.

2. Click the **ID** of the bundle to be sent.

3. All needs included in the bundle are listed at the bottom of the page. Review each need:

    a. If you wish to view or edit a record or patient set associated with a follow-back need, click the link in the **Pat/Rec** column.

    b. If a need is assigned to the wrong facility, refer to the *Assigning a Follow-back Need to another Facility* section of this chapter.

    c. To review or edit the need, click the **ID** of the need.

        i. Update the text in the **Question** and **Comment** fields as necessary.

        ii. Use the lookup to update the **Physician** field as necessary.

        iii. **Add** or **Remove** data items using the corresponding links.

        iv. You may change the **Urgency** using the drop down list box. The urgency level of the bundle will be set to the highest level of any need. You may use this field to prioritize the processing of follow-back requests.

        v. Click **Save**.

   d. If appropriate, you may close the follow-back need without sending it to the facility.

      i. Click the link in the **ID** column.

      ii. Change the **Need Status** to *Closed.*

      iii. Click **Save**. The need is removed from the Follow-back Management tool. It can be seen on the follow-back page of the record or patient set.

4. In the bundle's **Send To** field, specify the person at the facility to receive the query. Click the lookup icon to search the list of contacts associated with the facility. You will not be able to select an inactive contact or a contact associated with an inactive facility. See *Chapter 19: The Contact List* and *Chapter 18: The Organization and Facility List* for more information.

5. Click **Send Bundle**.

   a. If a valid address is available for each follow-back need, you will be prompted to confirm that you wish you send the bundle of needs. Click **OK**. The status of the bundle will change from *Open* to *Waiting*. If a valid address cannot be identified for one or more of the needs, an error message will be displayed. If a physician is designated for the need, a valid address must be defined for that physician in the Contact list. If no physician is designated, a valid address must be defined for the organization listed as the bundle's *Source to Query*.

   b. Click **Print Bundle** to create and open a PDF file containing the follow-back letters. There will be a separate letter for each physician and organization representative listed as a recipient. Use the Acrobat controls to print the letters and mail (or fax) them to the appropriate follow-back sources.

   c. Click **Save Bundle** to return to the follow-back manager. Note: Do not click Close Bundle to close the page. This closes the needs and is not for exiting the page.

Processing a Follow-back Response

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

The response to a follow-back inquiry may come in any form -- letter, fax, e-mail, or phone call. As determined by registry policy, you may make necessary edits to relevant data fields or you may provide the follow-back information to a staff member to make the necessary edits. You may provide the follow-back information to your staff by entering it into the follow-back need or in other formats (copies of the letter or fax, for example). Regardless, you should close each need addressed by the response. When it is closed, SEER*DMS will send e-mail notification to the staff member who submitted the need.

To process the response to a follow-back inquiry:

1. Open the appropriate bundle:

   a. Follow the steps in "Searching for a Follow-back Bundle".

   b. Click the **ID** of the Bundle.

2. If the respondent is someone other than the addressee, use the Lookup icon to select the appropriate **Responding Org Rep**.

3. If the response addresses all of the needs and you want other staff members to process the follow-back information:

    a. Enter a general description of the response in the **Response** field.

    b. Click **Close Bundle**. Each need will be closed and email notification will be sent to the staff members who submitted the needs. The description that you entered in the response field will be printed in the email.

    c. If necessary, provide follow-back information specific to each need to your staff members so that they can update the appropriate worklist tasks, records, or patient sets. The staff can search the worklist or database using the record or patient ID provided in the email.

    d. You are now finished and can skip the remaining steps.

4. If you want to change the record or patient set data based on the follow-back responses, repeat these steps for each need:

    a. Update the record or patient set data:

        i. Open the record or patient set associated with a follow-back need by clicking its link in the **Pat/Rec** column.

        ii. Make the appropriate changes to the record or patient set data fields. If appropriate based on registry policy, scan any documents received from the physician or facility related to this follow-back request. Attach the scanned document to the patient set or record as an Image.

        iii. Click **Save**.

        iv. Review your changes and add relevant comments. Click **Save and Exit**.

    b. Set the status of the follow-back need:

        i. Click the **ID** of the need.

        ii. To document your findings, enter text in the **Comment** field.

        iii. Change the **Need Status** to *Closed*.

        iv. Click **Save** to exit the Follow-back Need page.

    c. Follow-back needs are often created during worklist tasks, that is, a staff member working on a task may have required additional information. If the record or patient set was saved in a task to be completed at a later time, you or a staff member must open and complete the task. Refer to the chapter related to the task for further instructions.

5. If you want to provide the follow-back information to your staff by entering it into the follow-back needs, repeat these steps for each need:

   a. Click the **ID** of the need.

   b. Enter the response to the need in the **Response** field.

   c. You may enter relevant text in the **Comment** field.

   d. Change the **Need Status** to *Closed*.

   e. Click **Save** to exit the Follow-back Need page.

6. If you are expecting to receive information for needs that are still open, click **Save Bundle**.

7. If the response did not address one of the needs, follow the instructions in *Re-querying a Facility* to re-send the need to the same facility.

8. If a need was inappropriately addressed to this facility, follow the instructions in the *Assigning a Follow-back Need to another Facility* section of this chapter.

9. If you have processed each need in the bundle or wish to auto-close any remaining open needs, click **Close Bundle**. You must close the bundle even if you manually reassigned, re-queried, or closed each need.

10. As a follow-back need is closed, e-mail notification will be sent to the staff member who submitted the need.

Assigning a Follow-back Need to another Facility

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

If you do not receive a response from the facility, you may submit the request for information to another facility. Any open follow-back need can be reassigned.

To assign a follow-back need to a different facility:

1. Find the bundle that currently contains the follow-back need by following the instructions in the *Searching for a Follow-back Bundle* section of this chapter.

2. Click the **ID** of the Bundle.

3. Click the **ID** of the need.

4. Click the  lookup to select a different **Source to Query**.

5. Verify that that the **Need Status** is set to *Reassigned*.

6. Click **Save** to exit the Follow-back Need page.

7. If there are other open needs in this bundle, you will need to click **Save Bundle** to exit.

Re-querying a Facility

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

If follow-back information submitted by a facility does not address the issue defined in a follow-back need, use “re-query” to move the need to an open bundle for the same facility. If there are no open bundles for the facility, one will be created.

To resend a follow-back need to the same facility:

1. Find the bundle that currently contains the follow-back need by following the instructions in the *Searching for a Follow-back Bundle* section of this chapter.
2. Click the **ID** of the bundle.
3. Click the **ID** of the need.
4. Change the **Need Status** to *Re-query*.
5. Click **Save** to exit the Follow-back Need page.
6. If there are other open needs in this bundle, you will need to click **Save Bundle** to exit.