

Chapter 22: Follow-back

In SEER*DMS, the term “follow-back” refers to the process of contacting a physician, abstractor, or reporting facility to obtain missing information or to resolve inconsistencies in data. An editor can submit a request for follow-back information while they are working with record or patient set data. In some automatic tasks, a request for follow-back information is auto-created when SEER*DMS detects that required data are missing. Each follow-back request is forwarded to the Follow-back Management tool for processing; and system users can review the follow-back inquiries associated with a record or patient set within the SEER*DMS editor.

The Follow-back Manager is a tool within SEER*DMS to organize follow-back needs and create files containing the names, addresses, and data items required in follow-back letters. These files are downloaded and used with standard word-processing software to create mail merge letters.

Note: In SEER*DMS, follow-back specifically related to death clearance is typically managed using the Death Clearance Manager as described in Chapter 17.

In this chapter, you'll learn about

- Understanding Follow-back in SEER*DMS
- Creating a Follow-back Need Manually
- Follow-back Needs Created in Automatic Tasks
- Using the Follow-back Manager
- Modifying a Follow-back Need to
 - Process a response
 - Re-direct the follow-back question to a different facility or physician
 - Edit the question text
- Creating Follow-back Letters
- Mail Merge Fields

Understanding Follow-back in SEER*DMS

A request for follow-back information is stored in SEER*DMS as a “follow-back need” (FBN). An FBN can be defined manually while editing, screening, or consolidating data; or it may be created automatically if SEER*DMS detects that required data are missing from a record or patient set (the automatic “Add Follow-back” task is described on your registry’s workflow diagram).

The following describes the typical steps related to follow-back.

1. While editing data or completing a task, a user submits a “follow-back need” (FBN). The question or request may be directed to an abstractor, physician, hospital or other facility.
2. The user continues with their work. Typically, the need for more information does not prevent the user from completing a task; however, an FB worklist flag is associated with the task to indicate that an FBN was submitted.
3. A registry manager uses the SEER*DMS Follow-back Manager to review and process open FBNs. They select a set of FBNs to be included in the same batch of letters, assign a group ID to indicate that those FBNs have been processed, and extract a mail merge file. That file is used with standard word-processing software to generate letters.

4. The response to a follow-back question is processed. The patient's data are updated to incorporate new information and the FBN is closed.

A follow-back need has the following attributes:

- **Follow-back Need ID** – an identifier using an FBN format (FBN-12345, for example)
- **Record or Patient Set ID (REC- or PAT- prefix)** – This is a required field within a follow-back need; each need is associated with either a record or a patient set.
- **CTC** – A follow-back need can be associated with a CTC in a patient set. This is not required, but is necessary in order to include cancer data fields in letters or forms. The CTC field is not applicable for follow-back needs related to records.
- **Facility** – This field is optional. Follow-back questions may be directed to a facility and use the facility's address in the letter, if desired. This field may be left blank if the follow-back letter will be directed to a physician or abstractor.
- **Recipient** – This field is optional. The Recipient field may be set to an abstractor, physician, or other contact. If the recipient field is blank, the follow-back need may be directed to a facility and the letter addressed to the primary contact at the facility.
- **Question** – Text defining the follow-back question or request.
- **Response** – A text field that may be used to document the response received from the physician, abstractor, or contact. The use of this field is determined by registry policies and procedures. You may use this field to record the actual response or to document whether or not a response was ever received; or you may ignore the FBN response field and document the response in the record or patient set.
- **Data Items** – The names of record or patient set fields related to the follow-back need. This allows you include a list of fields in the follow-back letter. Only the field names are written to the mail merge file, not the actual values. External reports could be developed to include the field values in the letter, if necessary.
- **Created By (User and Date)** – The username of the person who created the follow-back need and the date it was created.
- **Group** – Creating a group of follow-back needs assigns a Group ID and a Date Grouped to a set of needs. Typically, follow-back needs are organized into groups in order to track whether or not letters have been generated. A registry manager assigns a set of follow-back needs to a group and then extracts a mail merge file for that group. When groups are used in this way, the Group ID identifies FBNs that were included in the same mailing.
- **Status:**
 - **Open** – An open status indicates that the FBN has not been resolved.
 - **Closed** – A follow-back need is closed when a response is received and processed by a registry manager; or if the manager determines that the inquiry is not necessary.
- **Mail Merge Date** - The most recent date on which a mail merge extract was created that included this follow-back need.
- **Type of Letter** – A lookup identifying the form or letter required for this FBN. The letter types are defined by the registry and stored in a database table (*Ikup_fb_type_of_letter*). To define a new value for the lookup, a registry manager must submit a request via the SEER*DMS Technical Support Squish project.

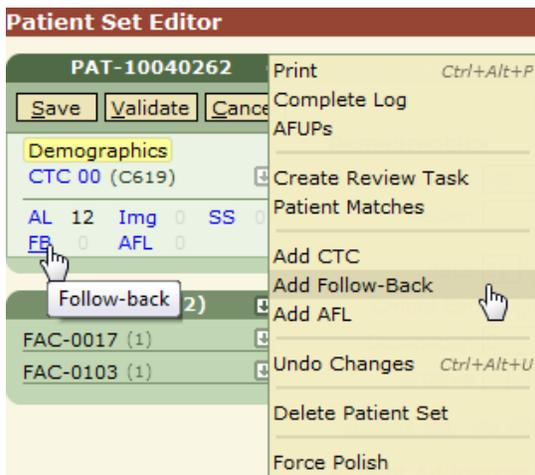
Creating a Follow-back Need Manually

Requires system permission: *fb_initiate*

While editing data or completing a task, you may determine that you need additional information from an abstractor, physician, or the reporting facility. You may submit a request for information by creating a "follow-back need".

To create a follow-back need:

1. Open the Follow-back popup window, as described below:
 - a. Match-Consolidate Task – click the **Follow-back** button in the Incoming Record section.
 - b. Pathology Screening Task – select **Add Follow-back** from the record menu.
 - c. In other tasks and when editing data, you may either select **Add Follow-back** from the record or patient set menu; or you may click the **FB** link to review other follow-back questions for the data and then click **Add Follow-back**.



2. The Add Follow-back popup will be displayed.

A screenshot of the 'Add Follow-Back' popup window. The title bar is dark red. The main content area has a green background and is titled 'New Follow-Back Need for PAT-10040262'. It contains several input fields: 'CTC' (dropdown), 'Facility' (text with lightbulb icon), 'Recipient' (text with lightbulb icon), and 'Type of Letter' (dropdown). Below these is a section 'Patient Set Demographic Info' with fields for 'Name' (DOE, JOHN), 'Med Rec #' (text), 'SSN' (123-45-6789), and 'Date Of Birth' (08-29-1961). A section 'Data Items' contains the text 'This Follow-Back Need is not linked to any data items.' and a link 'add data item'. At the bottom is a 'Question' text area and 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

- a. If your follow-back need relates to a specific CTC within a patient set, you have the option of selecting the CTC. This field will be auto-filled if you were viewing a CTC data page when you selected Add Follow-back from the patient set menu. This field is not displayed if the follow-back is for a record.
- b. You may specify a facility, a recipient, or both:
 - i. To designate a **Facility**, enter the facility ID or use the  lookup to select the appropriate facility. If you are creating an FBN for a record, this field will be auto-filled with the record's source facility.
 - ii. Follow-back inquiries may be addressed directly to an abstractor, physician, or other contact. To direct your question to a specific person, use the  lookup to set the **Recipient**.
3. You may select a value from the **Type of Letter** drop-down list. The list includes letter types defined by your registry manager.
4. If appropriate, create a list of data fields related to this follow-back need. The field names may be included in the follow-back letter.
 - a. Click **add data item**.
 - b. Begin typing text into **Field**. SEER*DMS will present a list of candidates that match the text that you have entered.
 - c. Or use the Firefox search tool to find text within the list of available fields. Click the  lookup to view a list of available fields. Click CTRL-F (Firefox shortcut for "Find in this page"). Click "Find Next" in the Firefox toolbar to move to the next match in the list.
5. 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.
6. Click **Save** to submit the follow-back need and return to the record editor, patient set editor, or worklist task.
7. 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).

Follow-back Needs Created in Automatic Tasks

The final process in the SEER*DMS workflow involves automated checks of the patient set data. SEER*DMS 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 your registry's workflow diagram. The workflow diagrams for each registry are posted on the SEER*DMS Web portal (<https://seer.cancer.gov/seerdms/portal/registry-folders>).

Using the Follow-back Manager

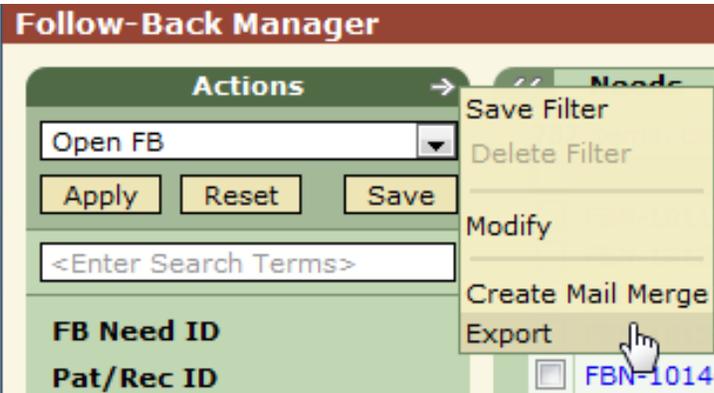
Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

SEER*DMS's Follow-back manager is used to review and process the follow-back needs. Periodically, a registry manager will review, edit, and compile the requests into a single communiqué for a physician, abstractor or other contact at a facility.

To view a filtered list of follow-back needs (FBN):

1. Select **Manage > Follow-back**.
2. You may change filter settings to view a specific set of FBNs (or use filter shortcuts in the Views described in step 3). The filters are described below. General instructions for using filters are provided in *Chapter 3: Using SEER*DMS*.
 - a. **FB Need ID, Pat/Rec ID, Group ID:** Filters to search by follow-back need ID, follow-back group ID, patient set ID, or record ID.
 - b. **Status:** An indicator for whether the follow-back need is open or closed.
 - c. **Question:** You may use this filter to search for FB Needs based on question text.
 - d. **Type of Letter:** A lookup identifying the form or letter required for this FBN. The letter types are defined by the registry and stored in a database table (*lkup_fb_type_of_letter*). To define a new value for the lookup, a registry manager must submit a request via the SEER*DMS Technical Support Squish project.
 - e. **Facility:** Facility assigned to the follow-back need. Typically, this is the hospital or facility that sent the data to the registry.
 - f. **Recipient:** The physician, abstractor, or other contact to whom the follow-back is directed.
 - g. **Contact Method:** This filter is based on the contact method defined for the recipient. You may use this filter to exclude FBNs from mailings, to find FBN's that must be assigned to other recipients, or to close FBNs that cannot be sent.
 - h. **Physician:** This filter allows you to separate FBNs for physicians from FBNs designated to abstractors or other contacts. This filter is based on whether the FBN Recipient field is designated as a physician in the SEER*DMS Contact list.
 - i. **Created Date, Created By:** The date submitted and the user who submitted the follow-back need. The Created By field is set to seerdms in auto-generated FB needs.
 - j. **Closed Date, Closed By:** The date closed and the user who closed the follow-back need. The Closed By field is set to seerdms in auto-closed FB needs.
 - k. **Grouped Date:** The most recent date that a FB Need was assigned to a group.
 - l. **Mail Merge Date:** The date of the most recent mail merge that included the FB Need.
3. The Follow-back Manager has 3 views:
 - a. The **Needs** view is shown by default. In this view, the FBNs are shown individually. Using this view you can:
 - i. Edit or view an FBN by clicking its **ID**.
 - ii. Open the patient set or record by clicking the ID in the **Pat/Rec** column.
 - iii. Set the **Group** filter by clicking a Group ID in the table.

- iv. If the browser window will not support the width of the table, the question text will be hidden by default. You can click the **show questions** link to show the full text; click **hide questions** to suppress the text and show the Created By, Created (date), and Closed (date) columns.
- b. The **Facility** and **Recipient** views show the number of FBNs per facility or recipient. Their names and addresses are also shown. If you would like to process FBNs for a specific facility or recipient, click the appropriate ID. The filters will be auto-filled and the individual Needs will be displayed in the Needs view.

 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Follow-Back Manager' interface. At the top, there is an 'Actions' menu with options: 'Open FB', 'Apply', 'Reset', 'Save', and a search field '<Enter Search Terms>'. Below this is a table with columns 'FB Need ID' and 'Pat/Rec ID'. A row is visible with 'FBN-1014'. The 'Actions' menu is open, showing options: 'Save Filter', 'Delete Filter', 'Modify', 'Create Mail Merge', and 'Export'. A mouse cursor is pointing at the 'Export' option.</p>	<p>Use the Actions menu to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify a set of FB Needs. This will modify FBNs with a check in the box next to their IDs. If none are checked, all FBN Needs in the filtered list will be modified. Use the dialog shown below to continue. • Create a mail merge file as described in the Creating Follow-back letters section of this chapter) • Export the filtered list of FB Needs to a CSV file. Open the file in Excel to format and print the list.
 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Modify Selected' dialog box. It has several options with checkboxes: 'Set Grouping' (checked), 'Set Status', 'Set Facility', 'Set Recipient', and 'Set Letter Type'. The 'Set Grouping' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'Group Together', 'Group Together', and 'Ungroup'. At the bottom are 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.</p>	<p>Use the Modify dialog to make one or more of these changes to a set of FB Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign the FB Needs to a group or remove them from a group. Groups are described in the <i>Creating Follow-back Letters</i> and <i>Understanding Follow-back</i> sections of this chapter. • Set the status to open or closed. • Change the facility or recipient. • Set the type of letter.

Modifying a Follow-back Need

Requires system permission: *fb_initiate* or *fb_manager*

The response to a follow-back inquiry may come in any form -- letter, fax, e-mail, or phone call. Registry policy determines whether one person processes the follow-back responses or if the responses are distributed to the editing staff for processing. Regardless of how the response is processed, the FBN should be closed if the response fulfills the need. When an FBN is closed, SEER*DMS sends an e-mail to the person who created the FBN. (Note: an email is not sent if the FBN is closed by the person who created it.) If the response did not fulfill the need then you may need to resubmit the question or redirect it to another physician or facility.

You may modify an individual FBN using the Follow-back Need Editor or you may use the Follow-back Manager to modify batches of FBNs (batch changes are described in the *Using the Follow-back Manager* section of this chapter for instructions). When you edit an individual FBN you may close, re-open, re-direct, set the response field, modify the question text, or specify data items.

To modify a single follow-back need:

1. Open the Follow-back Need Editor using one of these methods:
 - a. Open the follow-back need (FBN) within the record or patient set editor. An FBN is often modified after updates are made to a record or patient set data based on the response to the follow-back question. Once you updated the record or patient set, you may use one of two methods to access the FBN:
 - i. Click **Save**. Open FBNs will be included in the list of Open Items. Click the **ID** of the FBN to modify it.
 - ii. Or click the **FB** link in the left navigation of the patient set or record editor. Click the **ID** of the FBN to modify it.
 - b. Or open the FBN directly. If you know the follow-back need ID, enter it into the **Lookup** box on the SEER*DMS toolbar (you must include the FBN prefix).
 - c. Or use the Follow-back Manager to find and open the FBN. Select **Manage > Follow-back** and use the filters to search for the FBN.

Follow-Back Need View ▾ Manage ▾ System ▾ Help ▾

FBN-36240

ID	<input type="text" value="PAT-20041543"/>	Group	<input type="text"/>	Facility	<input type="text" value="FAC-0038"/>
CTC	<input type="text" value="CTC 02 (C341-2)"/>	Created By	<input type="text" value="coyle"/>	Recipient	<input type="text"/>
Status	<input type="text" value="Open"/>	Created	<input type="text" value="08-13-2009"/>	Type of Letter	<input type="text"/>

Record Demographic Info

Name	<input type="text" value="DOE, JOHN M"/>				
Med Rec #	<input type="text"/>	SSN	<input type="text" value="123-45-6789"/>	Date Of Birth	<input type="text" value="08-29-1927"/>

Data Items

This Follow-Back Need is not linked to any data items.
[add data item](#)

Question:

Response:

2. To close or re-open the FBN, use the drop-down box to change the **Status**.
3. To re-direct the FBN to another facility or to another recipient, use the lookups to change one or both of those fields.

4. If you want to indicate that this FBN needs to be grouped for a mailing, click the  icon next to the Group field. This will remove the FBN from its current group.
5. You may update or add the text in the Question or Response fields. The use of the Response field varies by registry.
6. If appropriate, modify the list of data fields related to this follow-back need. The field names may be included in the follow-back letter.
 - a. To add items, click the **add data item** link shown at the end of the current list.
 - i. Begin typing text into **Field**. SEER*DMS will present a list of candidates that match the text that you have entered.
 - ii. Or use the Firefox search tool to find text within the list of available fields. Click the  lookup to view a list of available fields. Click CTRL-F (Firefox shortcut for "Find in this page"). Click "Find Next" in the Firefox toolbar to move to the next match in the list.
 - b. To remove data items, click the  icon.
7. You may select a value from the **Type of Letter** drop-down list. The list includes letter types defined by your registry manager.

Creating Follow-back Letters

Requires system permission: *fb_manager*

Registries use the mail merge feature of word processors to generate follow-back letters, lists, and forms. Mail merges require a document (form letter) and a "data source file" that has the address list for the letters. SEER*DMS creates the data source file for follow-back letters. This file contains the follow-back question, patient information, and the names and addresses of physicians, abstractors, or other contacts. The SEER*DMS technical support team will assist registry staff in creating mail merge documents.

The following is a summary of the steps to create follow-back letters:

1. Use the Follow-back Manager in SEER*DMS to select the Follow-back Needs that will be included in the batch of letters.
2. Assign the selected needs to a group. This step is not required, but is recommended for tracking purposes. It provides an easy method for identifying FBNs that have been sent.
3. Create data source file that will be merged into your letter template. This is called the "mail merge file" in SEER*DMS.
4. Use your word processing software to generate letters using your mail merge form letter and the data source created in step 3.

To create the data source file for mail merges:

1. Use the filters in the Follow-back Manager to select FB Needs for this batch of letters. The following filter settings are commonly used in this step:
 - a. Set **Grouped** to *No* if you use groups to indicate that an FBN has been sent.
 - b. Set **Status** to *Open* to exclude FBNs that have already been resolved.
 - c. If you are creating doctor form letters, set **Recipient Type** to *Physicians Only*. If you are creating letters for abstractors or other contacts you may set this to *Exclude Physicians*.

- d. Select **Recipient Contact Methods**, if appropriate. The use of this filter varies by registry and requires the registry to maintain the contact method field for physicians and other contacts (see *Chapter 19: The Contact List*).
 - e. Select values for other filters as appropriate (see the *Using the Follow-back Manager* section of this chapter for a description of all filters).
2. Assign the selected needs to a group (this step is optional – assign the FBNs to a group if your registry uses group information to track whether FBNs have been sent).
 - a. Select **Actions -> Modify**.
 - b. Check **Set Grouping** and select *Group Together*.
 - c. Click **OK**.
 3. The Follow-back Manager filters will automatically be set to show the FBNs in the new group. Create and save the mail merge data source file.
 - a. Select **Actions -> Create Mail Merge**.
 - b. You will be prompted to Open or Save the file. Give the file a meaningful name and save it on your computer or network. Note: This file contains confidential patient information.

Mail Merge Fields

The Create Mail Merge action in the Follow-back Manager creates a CSV file that can be used as the data source for a mail merge. The fields listed below are included in the mail merge extract.

Column Header	Database Table	Database Field	Description
displayId	FB_NEED	DISPLAY_ID	Identifier for the follow-back need with the FBN prefix.
groupId	FB_NEED	GROUP_ID	Follow-back Group ID with the FBG prefix.
typeOfLetter	FB_NEED	TYPE_OF_LETTER	Text string defining the type of letter. The possible values are defined by the registry.
createdByUsername		user.USERNAME for fb_need.CREATED_BY	SEER*DMS username of the person who created the FBN. This is seerdms for auto-created FBNs.
createdByFirstName		users.FIRST_NAME for fb_need.CREATED_BY	First name of the person who created the follow-back need. This is seerdms for auto-created FBNs.
createdByLastName		users.LAST_NAME for fb_need.CREATED_BY	Last name of the person who created the follow-back need. This is seerdms for auto-created FBNs.
recordDisplayId	RECORD	DOCUMENT_ID	If the FBN is related to a record then this column will contain the Record ID (REC prefix).
patientDisplayId	PATIENT	DISPLAY_ID	If the FBN is related to a patient set then this column will contain the Patient Set ID (PAT prefix).
tumorRecordNumber	CTC or RECORD	TUMOR_RECORD_NUMBER	Tumor Record Number (CTC) can be used in external

Column Header	Database Table	Database Field	Description
			scripts to identify the CTC and include other CTC fields in letters, if desired.
nameLast	RECORD or PATIENT	NAME_LAST	Patient last name.
nameFirst	RECORD or PATIENT	NAME_FIRST	Patient first name.
nameMiddle	RECORD or PATIENT	NAME_MIDDLE	Patient middle name.
ssn	RECORD or PATIENT	SOCIAL_SECURITY_NUMBER	Patient SSN .
dob	RECORD or PATIENT	BIRTH_DATE_	Patient date of birth.
Race1	RECORD or PATIENT	lkup_race.value for RACE_1	Patient race
medRecNum	RECORD or PATIENT_REFERENCE_ID	MEDICAL_RECORD_NUMBER	If the FBN is for a patient set then the Med Rec Num is only included if an FBN facility is defined. The Med Rec Num for that facility is used.
accessionNumber	RECORD (r) or CTC_REFERENCE_ID (cri)	r.ACCESSION_NUMBER_HOSP or cri.ACCESSION_NUMBER	The Accession Number is included for FBNs related to records. If the FBN is related to a patient set then the Accession Number is only included if a CTC and FBN facility are specified. The Accession Number in the CTC for the FBN facility is used.
primarySite	RECORD or CTC	PRIMARY_SITE	Primary site.
histology	RECORD or CTC	lkup_histology.TEXT for the HISTOLOGY and BEHAVIOR	Text from the morphology lookup based on the histology and behavior on the record or CTC.
eventDate	RECORD or CTC	RECORD.EVENT_DATE_ Or CTC.DATE_OF_DIAGNOSIS_	
dataItems	FB_NEED_DATA_ITEM	data_item.DATA_NAME	The names of the fields selected as FBN data items. Fields are comma-separated within quotes.
personDisplayId	PERSON	DISPLAY_ID	The recipient's display ID from the Contact table (PER prefix).
personTitle	PERSON	TITLE	The recipient's title as defined in the Contact table.
personLastName	PERSON	NAME_LAST	The recipient's last name as defined in the Contacts table.
personFirstName	PERSON	NAME_FIRST	The recipient's first name as defined in the Contacts table.
personMiddleName	PERSON	NAME_MIDDLE	The recipient's middle name as defined in the Contacts table.
personDegree	PERSON	ACADEMIC_DEGREE	Recipient's academic degree as defined in the Contacts table.
personContactMethod	PERSON	PREF_CONTACT_METHOD	Recipient's method of contact as defined in the Contacts table.
personAddress	PERSON	STREET_ADDRESS	Recipient's street address as defined in the Contacts table.
personCity	PERSON	CITY	City defined for the recipient

Column Header	Database Table	Database Field	Description
			in the Contacts table.
personState	PERSON	STATE	State defined for the recipient in the Contacts table.
personZip	PERSON	POSTAL_CODE	Zip code defined for the recipient in the Contacts table.
personFax	PERSON	FAX_NUM	Fax number for the recipient as defined in the Contacts table.
personPhone	PERSON	PHONE_NUM	Phone number of the recipient as defined in the Contacts table.
facilityDisplayId	FACILITY	DISPLAY_ID	The display ID for the facility (FAC prefix).
facilityName	FACILITY	FAC_NAME	The name of the facility.
facilityAddress	FACILITY	STREET_ADDRESS	The facility's address.
facilityCity	FACILITY	CITY	The facility's city.
facilityState	FACILITY	STATE	The facility's state.
facilityZip	FACILITY	POSTAL_CODE	The zip code for the facility.
facilityFax	FACILITY	FAX_NUM	The fax number for the facility.
facilityPhone	FACILITY	PHONE_NUMBER	The phone number of the facility.
question	FB_NEED	QUESTION	Question text.

