

ABORIGINAL SELF IDENTIFIER (ASI) FORM

Questions and Answers for Staff

Q. What is the Aboriginal Self Identifier (ASI) form?

- A. *The ASI is a voluntary form new applicants and clients are asked to complete. The ASI form asks if the individual is First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit. An individual who identifies as a First Nations person can also indicate if he or she is registered under the Indian Act of Canada (i.e., status or non-status).*

Q. Why is the ministry asking clients to complete the ASI form?

- A. *The BC government is committed to a new relationship with the Aboriginal community and closing the gap in social and economic conditions between Aboriginal persons and other British Columbians. The ASI will assist the ministry in offering more culturally sensitive programs and referrals to more appropriate resources.*

Q. Who should be asked to complete the ASI form?

- A. *All new applicants and clients should be offered the opportunity to complete the form, as many people may not appear to be of Aboriginal descent.*

For those who are not of Aboriginal descent, they would indicate they are not Aboriginal and the rest of the questions would not apply.

Q. What happens if a person chooses not to complete the ASI form?

- A. *Completion of the ASI form is completely voluntary and does not affect the person's eligibility for income assistance. Ensure the person understands the benefits of completing the form. If the person still chooses not to complete the form, respect the decision. Offer the individual the opportunity to take the ASI form away and return it at a later date. Encourage individuals to contact Aboriginal organizations for further information on the ASI. A list of Aboriginal organizations is available on the OLR in the BC Employment and Assistance (BCEA) Application - Stage 2.*

Q. What are the benefits for Aboriginal people?

- A. *The ministry is committed to improving social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people by offering more culturally sensitive programs and referrals to more appropriate resources. This means that every response is crucial to providing a fuller picture of the impact of current trends and determining*

future needs. More appropriate programs will improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

Q. Why is the ministry collecting personal data for Aboriginal persons only and not other ethnic groups?

- A. *Collecting this data supports the Transformative Change Accord (an agreement between the Province, Federal Government and First Nations) and the BC government's commitment to close the social and economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians. For example, BC's Aboriginal people have an unemployment rate that is two to three times that of non-Aboriginal persons. Without this information it is difficult to determine if ministry policies and programs are assisting Aboriginal people.*

Q. What input have Aboriginal organizations had in developing the ASI?

- A. *The ministry has had discussions with Aboriginal organizations in the development of the ASI questions.*

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) also worked with Aboriginal organizations and the First Nations Leadership Council to develop the Data Standard that will be used across ministries for the collection and analysis of information about Aboriginal people.

Q. How will the data be used?

- A. *The information provided in the ASI will be used by the ministry to refer clients to appropriate resources and to assist in the development of programs for Aboriginal people.*

Q. Will personal information be used in any other way?

- A. *The data will be used to determine the effectiveness of programs and services and to design new programs.*

It will be used for research to identify trends and outcomes for Aboriginal persons and to measure progress in closing the socioeconomic gap.

Aboriginal data and personal information collected will not be used to do eligibility-related data matches with any other federal or provincial programs.

Q. Is the information confidential?

A. *After the data is collected, it will be stored in the ministry database and held in the strictest confidence. It is protected by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, as is all personal data collected by the ministry.*

Q. Are there any other organizations that ask similar questions?

A. *Yes, more organizations are recognizing the need to offer programs tailored for Aboriginal peoples, and have included the request for this information in their applications. This includes other government ministries, colleges and universities. Specific examples include:
the Saskatchewan income assistance program, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, Northern Lights College and the Justice Institute of BC.*

Q. Where can I get more information on the ASI?

A. *You will find the ASI policy and procedures on the OLR under BCEA Application – Stage 2. Under Resources for Staff, you will also find the Guide for the Aboriginal Self-Identifier Program, the Systems Memo and the ASI script that will provide suggestions for rationale and wording. A brochure will be available for the general public and ministry clients, as well as a set of Q&As. Both are accessible on the public portion of the OLR.*