

MAXIMUM LENGTH OF BINARY DATA ELEMENT

REQUEST

The maximum length in the current Data Element Dictionary of the “Binary” data element is $1E + 16$.

At one time it was $(10^{15}) - 1$.

X12.6 indicates that this element has no defined length.

- 1) Should the maximum length be deleted?
- 2) If not, what is the correct value?

REFERENCED X12 STANDARDS

A “Request for Interpretation” applies to a specific version of the X12 Standards. The author failed to provide a specific version of the standard in the request. We have chosen to base this response on Version 5 Release 4 of the X12 Standard. As the areas of the X12 Standards applicable to this interpretation have been relatively stable over time, it is likely that the same interpretation would be provided for earlier versions of the X12 Standards.

The following X12 Standards were reviewed in developing this interpretation:

X12.6 Application Control Structure (Defines syntactical architecture of data)	Version 005	Release 040
X12.22 Data Segment Directory (Defines binary segments BIN and BDS)	Version 005	Release 040
X12.3 Data Element Dictionary (Defines Data Elements: 784 Length of Binary Data and 785 Binary Data)	Version 005	Release 040

FORMAL INTERPRETATION

It is correct that X12.6 does not restrict the maximum length of a binary data element nor does it restrict the maximum length of a numeric data element. When a data element is defined in X12.3 Data Element Dictionary a maximum length must be specified.

The actual length of a Data Element 785 instance is specified in DE 784. Data Element 784 currently specifies a maximum length of 15 which effectively limits the maximum DE length of 785 in the two segments BIN and BDS in which it is used.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

If a Work Request to increase the length of Data Element 784 were to be submitted and approved this would change the maximum length of a DE 785 instance.