

## SEGMENT AND DATA ELEMENT DEFINITIONS

### Response to Request for Interpretation

The submitted request for interpretation asks several questions. Each of these questions is answered separately in the interpretation.

The documents relevant to this interpretation are:

X12.3	Data Element Dictionary	Version 4 Release 5
X12.6	Application Control Structure	Version 4 Release 5
X12.22	Segment Directory	Version 4 Release 5

### Question

“Is the definition of a data element or segment part of the standard?”

### Interpretation

Yes, the definition of a data element or segment is part of the standard. Some content of a definition may be exemplary. Exemplary information is non-normative. Such examples are expected to comply with the definition, but they do not constrain the definition. The following excerpts from the X12.6 standard support this interpretation.

X12.6 section 3.5.2 Data Element Dictionary states:

“For each data element, the dictionary specifies the name, description, type, minimum length, and maximum length. For ID data elements, the dictionary lists all code values and their descriptions or a reference where the valid code list can be obtained.”

X12.6 section 3.7 Data Segment states:

“The directory defines each segment including the segment’s name, purpose, and identifier. The directory also defines composite data structures and data elements that a segment contains in their specified order.”

### Question

“For an implementation compliant with the X12 standard, must a user comply with such requirements or restrictions in a definition?”

### Interpretation

Yes, an implementation compliant with the X12 standard must comply with both the syntax and semantic requirements and constraints defined in the X12 standard.

### Question

“If the definition or purpose is not part of the standard, does that mean that any data can be used in that item?”

### Interpretation

Whereas the definition and purpose are part of the standard, compliance with the standard does require conformance to the definition and purpose.

### FURTHER DISCUSSION (Non-Normative):

This section is not part of the formal interpretation. It provides non-normative discussion related to questions asked in the interpretation.

*DE 509 Originating Company Identifier*

The description for this data element references three non-X12 standards.

The ANSI ICD standard was not reviewed in preparing this interpretation. For review purposes, it was assumed that the ANSI ICD standard defines at least the three codes explicitly allowed in DE 509, and that these three codes might be a subset of the codes defined in ANSI ICD.

Only the specific ICD codes specified in the description are permitted for use in DE 509. The remaining characters in the element must comply with the rules defined in the referenced ANSI ICD standard, and must be exactly nine characters in length, to comply with the DE 509

maximum length designator. Should a data instance not comply with the X12 rule, it would not be in conformance with X12 syntax standard X12.6. Should a data instance not comply with the implied ANSI ICD rule for a data instance, it would then also not be in compliance with the specified X12 semantics stated in the description within X12.3.

The X12J Technical Assessment Subcommittee has been advised that formal references should be made to the other standards referenced in this data element. Such formal references would be located in the non-normative appendix to the X12 standard, labeled "Code Sources."

*DE 116 Postal Code*

The description for this data element places constraints on the syntactic expression of Postal Code values. It does not limit the element to US postal codes, as the parenthetical "(zip code for United States)" is only provided to give an example of a postal code source for clarity of understanding.

The X12J Technical Assessment Subcommittee has been advised that the parenthetical expression in this description should be clearly marked as example, as in: "(e.g., zip code for United States)"

*DE 332 Percent, Decimal Format*

The description for this data element clearly indicates that the value range shown in a parenthetical expression is exemplary, and thus is not restrictive. That is, the data element description does not "specify a specific decimal format" as assumed in the reference made to DE 332 in the request for interpretation.

The X12J Technical Assessment Subcommittee has been advised that the reader misunderstood the example. Change to a pair of examples showing different precision has been suggested.