

ICD-10-CM codes for social determinants of health (SDoH)

Using SDoH coding to transform health outcomes

Did you know?

Studies continue to substantiate the effect of social determinants of health (SDoH) on health outcomes. In fact, a 2014 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study found that 80 percent of a person's health is determined by SDoH*, the societal and environmental conditions people live with every day: food, housing, transportation, education, violence, social support, health behaviors, and employment. Yet, diagnostic coding – essential to understanding and addressing SDoH – lags behind.

A new day in SDoH coding

Past challenges in adoption and policy have made it difficult for SDoH coding to become standard practice. Now, with increased awareness among care providers of such codes' importance and expanded coding permissions, there is an unprecedented opportunity to leverage the wealth of information SDoH data holds. In addition to physicians, any clinician such as RNs, LPNs, case managers, discharge planners, social workers and nurses, can document SDoH information that can be used to assign codes.

Current and proposed SDoH codes

Another challenge lies in the basic lack of SDoH codes in existence. There are nine categories of codes (Z codes) currently available for documentation (Table 1). However, these are largely open to interpretation and not representative of the breadth of social determinant factors presenting barriers to good health and health care.

In an effort to expand the set of ICD-10 codes related to SDoH, UnitedHealthcare, with support from the American Medical Association, recently submitted 23 new codes, currently in review with the ICD-10 Maintenance and Coordination Committee. In addition, The American Hospital Association got approval from the ICD-10-CM Cooperating Parties (and published in its Coding Clinic) advice that allows reporting codes from categories Z55-Z65, based on information documented by all clinicians involved in the care of the patient.



What payers do with SDoH data

Payers equipped with SDoH data are empowered to facilitate greater care coordination, identify patients who can benefit from care management programs, and identify patients who may benefit from social, community and government services and refer them to local and national resources. Payers are also able to track impacts on patient/member health outcomes.

What can you do?

Create awareness among staff and care team members of the value of SDoH coding and facilitate coding practice as a part of patient-visit protocol. Encourage them to continue awareness efforts among colleagues and patients to further fuel greater understanding and interest in the value of addressing SDoH.



*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings, "Relationships between Determinant Factors and Health Outcomes"

Table 1

ICD-10-CM Code Category	Problems/Risk Factors Included in Category
Z55 – Problems related to education and literacy	Illiteracy, schooling unavailable, underachievement in a school, educational maladjustment and discord with teachers and classmates.
Z56 – Problems related to employment and unemployment	Unemployment, change of job, threat of job loss, stressful work schedule, discord with boss and workmates, uncongenial work environment, sexual harassment on the job, and military deployment status.
Z57 – Occupational exposure to risk factors	Occupational exposure to noise, radiation, dust, environmental tobacco smoke, toxic agents in agriculture, toxic agents in other industries, extreme temperature, and vibration.
Z59 – Problems related to housing and economic circumstances	Homelessness, inadequate housing, discord with neighbors, lodgers and landlord, problems related to living in residential institutions, lack of adequate food and safe drinking water, extreme poverty, low income, insufficient social insurance and welfare support.
Z60 – Problems related to social environment	Adjustment to life-cycle transitions, living alone, acculturation difficulty, social exclusion and rejection, target of adverse discrimination and persecution.
Z62 – Problems related to upbringing	Inadequate parental supervision and control, parental overprotection, upbringing away from parents, child in welfare custody, institutional upbringing, hostility towards and scapegoating of child, inappropriate excessive parental pressure, personal history of abuse in childhood, personal history of neglect in childhood, Z62.819 Personal history of unspecified abuse in childhood, Parent-child conflict, and sibling rivalry.
Z63 – Other problems related to primary support group, including family circumstances	Absence of family member, disappearance and death of family member, disruption of family by separation and divorce, dependent relative needing care at home, stressful life events affecting family and household, stress on family due to return of family member from military deployment, alcoholism and drug addiction in family.
Z64 – Problems related to certain psychosocial circumstances	Unwanted pregnancy, multiparity, and discord with counselors.
Z65 – Problems related to other psychosocial circumstances	Conviction in civil and criminal proceedings without imprisonment, imprisonment and other incarceration, release from prison, other legal circumstances, victim of crime and terrorism, and exposure to disaster, war and other hostilities.

Supported by the following health organizations who have joined together to advance the adoption and expansion of SDoH data collection throughout the health care system. Via collaboration with health care providers, health care organizations, employers, policymakers, and others, we strive to affect the foundational aspects of population health that affect health outcomes and costs and cultivate a large-scale impact on quality of life.



Insurance coverage provided by or through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or its affiliates. Health plan coverage provided by UnitedHealthcare of Arizona, Inc., UHC of California DBA UnitedHealthcare of California, UnitedHealthcare of Colorado, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of the Mid-Atlantic, Inc., MAMSI Life and Health Insurance Company, UnitedHealthcare of New York, Inc., UnitedHealthcare Insurance Co. of New York, UnitedHealthcare of Oklahoma, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of Oregon, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of Pennsylvania, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of Texas, Inc., UnitedHealthcare Benefits of Texas, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of Utah, Inc., UnitedHealthcare of Washington, Inc., Optimum Choice, Inc., Oxford Health Insurance, Inc., Oxford Health Plans (NJ), Inc., Oxford Health Plans (CT), Inc., All Savers Insurance Company or other affiliates. Administrative services provided by OptumHealth Care Solutions LLC, OptumRx, Oxford Health Plans LLC, United HealthCare Services, Inc. or other affiliates. Behavioral health products provided by U.S. Behavioral Health Plan, California (USBHPC), United Behavioral Health (UBH) or its affiliates. PCA-1-19-00473-Clinical-Multi_08132019

