



CODEWRITE

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Proposed New Codes for SDOH Z Codes

By Marvin Yousif

During the last ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance Committee meeting in March 2019, a new proposal was made by UnitedHealthcare and the American Medical Association to add over 20 new Z-codes, under the existing social determinants of health (SDOH) categories Z55-Z65.¹ An additional proposal was made by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont and Yale School of Nursing to specifically add subcategory Z-codes related to food insecurity.²

The rationale for the new proposals is to allow for increased granularity when tracking the various social or societal determinants of one's health. The ability to better track these details will assist providers in their ability to refer and inform their patient population of community resources that might be available to them, and to improve patient outcomes.³

Kaiser Permanente Prepares to Address SDOH

Recently, Kaiser Permanente announced that it will soon be rolling out a plan called "Thrive Local" to track and address SDOH.⁴ According to an article in Modern Healthcare that discusses Kaiser's Thrive Local plan, "A number of hospitals and health systems in recent years have begun to incorporate patients' social needs within their EHR systems to aid clinicians in identifying the root cause of health problems. Some have modified their systems to help connect their patients to community resources."⁵

Healthy People 2020

The social determinants are categorized into five domains by the Healthy People 2020 initiative as follows: "(1) Economic Stability, (2) Education, (3) Health and Health Care, (4) Neighborhood and Built Environment, and (5) Social and Community Context."⁶ These factors play a large role in influencing healthcare status across a person's lifespan.

Proposed New Z-Codes

<u>Z-Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
Z55.5	Less than a high school degree
Z55.6	High school diploma or GED
Z56.83	Unemployed and seeking work
Z56.84	Unemployed but not seeking work
Z56.85	Employed part time or temporary
Z56.86	Employed full time
Z59.41	Lack of adequate food
Z59.42	Food insecurity
Z59.43	Lack of safe drinking water
Z59.61	Unable to pay for prescriptions
Z59.62	Unable to pay for utilities
Z59.63	Unable to pay for medical care
Z59.64	Unable to pay for transportation for medical appointments or prescriptions
Z59.65	Unable to pay for phone
Z59.66	Unable to pay for adequate clothing

Z59.67	Unable to find or pay for child care
Z59.69	Unable to pay for other needed items
Z59.91	Worried about losing housing
Z60.81	Unable to deal with stress
Z60.82	Inadequate social interaction - limited to once or twice a week
Z60.83	Can hardly ever count on family and friends in times of trouble
Z60.84	Feeling unsafe in current location
Z60.85	Stressed quite a bit or very much
Z60.86	Stressed somewhat
Z71.85	Counseling for socioeconomic factors
Z91.110	Patient's noncompliance with dietary regimen due to financial hardship ⁷

Pending Approval

After the meeting, the public was invited to comment on these proposed changes. At the time that this article was written, the proposals were still pending approval. In a recent letter to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), AHIMA made comments on the above proposed codes and provided the following recommendation: "We recommend that approval of new codes for SDHs be delayed until the work of the Gravity Project is completed, as we believe this project will lay the necessary foundation for development of new ICD-10-CM codes for SDHs. The Gravity Project is a national collaborative effort launched by the Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) to advance interoperable social risk and protective factors documentation."⁸

SNOMED CT, LOINC, and Others

Additional coding standards, such as the SNOMED Clinical Terms (SNOMED CT) and Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes (LOINC) also include codes to identify certain SDOH measures.⁹ Although interoperability has been an issue in the past for capturing and sharing standardized SDOH measures, LOINC has taken steps to address this challenge.¹⁰

The IHI Triple Aim Framework

It is also worth noting that addressing SDOH by using ICD-10-CM codes relates to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Triple Aim Framework:¹¹

1. Improving the patient experience of care (including quality and satisfaction);
2. Improving the health of populations; and
3. Reducing the per capita cost of health care.

Preparing for the Potential New Codes

Although the proposed new Z-codes are awaiting approval, it is always helpful to start early in preparing when changes may likely be coming down the pike soon. Some of the ways to prepare include:

- Informing and meeting with coding staff and healthcare providers about the potential new codes.
- Developing best practice guidelines for capturing SDOH measures, including any new forms that may need to be developed. Many stakeholders are working together. One such example is the upcoming "National Summit on Social Determinants of Health: Leveraging Partnerships & Resources to Impact Health Outcomes," June 23-25, 2019, in Washington, D.C.¹²
- Staying up to date on whether the new codes get approved by the NCHS or any future developments.

NOTES

1. National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). "ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance Committee Meeting Proposals (part 2)." March 5-6, 2019. P. 44-46. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/icd/icd10cm_maintenance.htm

2. Ibid, page 20.

3. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance (C&M) Committee Meeting (Morning Session at 1:43:40)." March 6, 2019. <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/C-and-M-Meeting->

[Materials-DL-Items/2019-03-05-ICD-CM-Agenda.html?DLPage=1&DLEntries=10&DLSort=0&DLSortDir=descending%20%5bSee](#)

4. Johnson, S.R. "Kaiser to Launch Social Care Network." Modern Healthcare. May 6, 2019. <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/care-delivery/kaiser-launch-social-care-network>
5. Ibid.
6. Healthy People 2020. "Social Determinants of Health." May 2019. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>
7. NCHS. "ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance Committee Meeting Proposals (Part 2)." March 5-6, 2019. P. 21-22, 45-46.
8. Harris, W. W. Letter to Donna Pickett at NCHS. AHIMA HIM Body of Knowledge. May 6, 2019. <http://bok.ahima.org/PdfView?oid=302740>
9. Arons, A. et al. "Documenting social determinants of health-related clinical activities using standardized medical vocabularies." *JAMIA Open* 2, no. 1 (April 2019): 81-88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jamiaopen/ooy051>
10. Vreeman, D.J. "Advancing the interoperability of social and behavioral determinants of health [begins at 12:39 in presentation]." August 20, 2018. <https://loinc.org/sdh/webinar/>
11. Institute for Healthcare Improvement. "The IHI Triple Aim." 2019. <http://www.ihl.org/Engage/Initiatives/TripleAim/Pages/default.aspx>
12. Rise. "National Summit on Social Determinants of Health Summit." <https://www.risehealth.org/event-center/rise-events/the-national-summit-on-social-determinants-of-health/>

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