

Proposed Guidance on Utilizing ICD-10 Z Codes for Social Determinants of Health Diagnoses

Background:

Providers now more than ever know the importance of social determinants of health (SDOH), and several health care organizations have started to screen for social needs and document them in the medical record. Some providers have started to code patient social needs with available ICD-10 z codes. However, this is not done consistently, and therefore data is not available to inform insurers and government about the prevalence of population-level SDOH. The codes that do make it to the claim, at this point in time, may not be comparable across providers given the ample room for interpretation that code descriptions have. If systematically coded in the claims data, SDOH diagnoses would inform population health analytics and actuarial analyses that enable the allocation of additional resources to address the SDOH (e.g. time, case management, research, funding, etc.) and improve healthcare outcomes.

There are several SDOH-related codes available in ICD-10, and more are likely to be added in the coming years. To reduce confusion about which codes to use and when, a workgroup convened to develop an abridged list of ICD-10 codes that aligned with common screening questions, social needs, and related priorities in New York State. This document summarizes the group’s consensus on ICD-10 Z codes for SDOH that should be utilized to include identified social needs on claims. The codes are organized into various SDOH domains, with priority given to five SDOH domains that align with state-wide and nationwide initiatives: (1) Homelessness, (2) Unstable Housing, (3) Environmentally Compromised Housing, (4) Food Insecurity, and (5) Transportation.

The following content was agreed upon by a SDOH Workgroup that included representatives from Greater New York Hospital Association, Healthcare Association of New York State, Community Health Center Association of New York State, and Human Services Council, as well as input from their respective member organizations. The group included representatives from United Hospital Fund, City University of New York, New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, and the New York State Department of Health’s Bureau of Social Determinants of Health.

Priority SDOH Codes

Social Need Identified	Social Determinants of Health ICD-10 Z Code	SDOH Workgroup Proposed Use	<u>PRAPARE Questions (link to paper form)</u>
Lack of housing	Z59.0 Homelessness	Use for individuals who are "Chronically homeless", or reside in shelter, or reside in the street/subway, or who will be discharged to shelter/street from institution.	UDS domain and usually collected during new patient registration. (PRAPARE Qs #1,2,5,6,9,13) (#7) What is your housing situation today? Affirmative Answer: I do not have housing (staying with others, in a hotel, in a shelter, living outside on the street, on a beach, in a car, or in a park)
Unstable housing	Z59.9 Problem related to housing and economic circumstances, unspecified	Use for individuals who fear eviction or who are at risk of eviction, or for individuals living with friends/family who fear losing their current housing situation.	(#7) What is your housing situation today? Affirmative Answer: I do not have housing (staying with others, in a hotel, in a shelter, living outside on the street, on a beach, in a car, or in a park)

Social Need Identified	Social Determinants of Health ICD-10 Z Code	SDOH Workgroup Proposed Use	PRAPARE Questions (link to paper form)
	<p><i>Proposed for October 2021:</i> Z59.91 Worried about losing housing</p>		<p>(#8) Are you worried about losing your housing? Affirmative Answer: Yes</p> <p>(#20) Do you feel physically and emotionally safe where you currently live? Affirmative Answer: Yes</p>
Environmentally compromised housing – Vermin	Z77.1 Contact with and (suspected) exposure to environmental pollution and hazards in the physical environment	Use for individuals whose housing is undermining their health - focus on respiratory issue triggers. *NOTE – this code is not billable, but the specific codes under this umbrella are.	N/A
Food insecurity	Z59.4 Lack of adequate food and safe drinking water <p><i>Proposed for October 2021:</i> Z59.41 Lack of adequate food Z59.42 Food insecurity Z59.43 Lack of safe drinking water</p>	Use for individuals who have food insecurity. <i>Excludes:</i> Effects of hunger (T73.0), inappropriate diet or eating habits (Z72.4), malnutrition (E40-E46)	<p>(#14) In the past year, have you or any family members you live with been unable to get any of the following when it was really needed? Affirmative Answer: Yes - Food.</p>
Medical and Social Transportation	Z75.3 Unavailability and inaccessibility of health-care facilities Z75.4 Unavailability and inaccessibility of other helping agencies <p><i>Newly Proposed for October 2021:</i> Z59.64 Unable to pay for transportation for medical appointments or prescriptions</p>	Use for individuals who have challenges to access healthcare and social services due to transportation.	<p>(#15) Has lack of transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work, or from getting things needed for daily living? Check all that apply. Affirmative Answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, it has kept me from medical appointments or from getting my medications. - Yes, it has kept me from non-medical meetings, appointments, work, or from getting things that I need.

Additional SDOH Codes

Social Determinant Identified	Social Determinant of Health ICD-10 Z Code	Proposed use	PRAPARE Questions
Education			
Less than high-school	Z55.0 Illiteracy and low-level literacy <i>Newly Proposed for October 2021:</i> Z55.5 <i>Less than a high school degree</i> Z55.6 <i>High school diploma or GED</i>	Use for individuals with less than high-school education/GED (regardless of country where the education was achieved) Consistent with ICD-10 description but sets low level of literacy reference at less than High School Education/GED.	(#10) What is the highest level of school that you have finished? Affirmative Answer: Less than a high school degree
Health literacy issues	Z55.9 Problems related to education and literacy, unspecified	Use for individuals who have issues understanding health information when presented in the usual health system formats or language of preference. No departure from guidance but adds specificity in use to a code with “unspecified” in its title. The rationale is that a Health literacy issue could qualify as a problem related to education and literacy not specified in any of the other Z55 categories.	N/A
Employment			
Unemployment	Z56.0 Unemployment, unspecified <i>Newly Proposed for October 2021:</i> Z56.83 <i>Unemployed and seeking work</i> Z56.84 <i>Unemployed but not seeking work</i>	Use for individuals who are currently unemployed and / or seeking employment.	(#11) What is your current work situation? Affirmative Answers: - Unemployed

			- Otherwise unemployed but not seeking work (ex: student, retired, disabled, unpaid primary care giver)
Problems with employment	Z56.9 Unspecified problems related to employment	Use for individuals who are currently employed have problems there and/or the problems are triggering seeking job change. Occupational problems or work circumstances, problems related to employment	N/A
Environmentally Compromised Housing			
Exposure to Mold	Z77.120 Contact with and (suspected) exposure to mold (toxic)	Use add if mold, dampness, water leaks are suspected No changes from ICD-10 guidance other than emphasizing its use for home environment	N/A
Exposure to Lead	Z77.011 Contact with and (suspected) exposure to lead	Use if peeling paint is suspected or lead exposure known.	N/A
Exposure to second hand smoke	Z77.22 Contact with and (suspected) exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (acute) (chronic)	Use if second hand smoke is suspected or known <i>Applicable to:</i> Exposure to second hand tobacco smoke (acute) (chronic), passive smoking (acute) (chronic) <i>Excludes:</i> Nicotine dependence, tobacco use (Z72.0)	N/A

Low Income			
Unable to pay for basic needs	<p>Z59.6 Low income</p> <p>Newly Proposed for October 2021: <i>Z59.62 Unable to pay for utilities</i> <i>Z59.63 Unable to pay for medical care</i> <i>Z59.65 Unable to pay for phone</i> <i>Z59.66 Unable to pay for adequate clothing</i> <i>Z59.67 Unable to find or pay for child care</i> <i>Z59.69 Unable to pay for other needed items</i> <i>Z71.85 Counseling for socioeconomic factors</i></p>	Use for individuals who are worried about or have trouble with meeting basic needs due to cost, namely utilities, phone, medical care, prescriptions, childcare.	<p>(#14) In the past year have you or any family members you live with been unable to get any of the following when it was really needed? Affirmative Answers: - Clothing: Yes - Medicine or any health care (Medical, Dental, Mental Health, Vision): Yes - Utilities: Yes - Phone: Yes</p> <p>(#12) What is your main insurance? Affirmative Answers: - None/uninsured - Medicaid - CHIP Medicaid - Medicare - Other public insurance (non-CHIP) - Other Public insurance (CHIP)</p> <p>(#13) Income level/ FPL percentage</p>
Caregiving Needs			
Caregiving needs	Z63.6 Dependent relative needing care at home	Use for clients who care for sick or handicapped person in family, dependent relative at home, cares for or supports sick or handicapped family member	<p>(#14) In the past year have you or any family members you live with been unable to get any of the following when it was really needed? Affirmative Answer: Yes – Childcare</p>
Social Supports			
Issues when living alone	Z60.2 Problems related to living alone	Use when individual lives alone, and reports a social, economic or activities of daily living challenge.	N/A
Lack of social support	Z60.8 Other problems related to social environment	Use when individual is lacking a primary, secondary support group and/or feels socially isolated. Excludes: Target of adverse	<p>(#16) How often do you see or talk to people that that you care about and feel close to? (For example: talking to friends on the phone, visiting friends or family, going to church or club meetings) Affirmative Answers:</p>

	Newly Proposed for October 2021: <i>Z60.83 Can hardly ever count on family and friends in times of trouble</i>	discrimination such as for racial or religious reasons	- Less than once a week - 1 or 2 times a week
Conflict in primary support group	Z63.9 Problems related to primary support group, unspecified	Use for including conflict with primary support group including family No departure from guidance, but Z63.9 is set as preferred umbrella code for a wide range of problems related to family and support group that may or may not have specific Z63 sub-codes.	N/A
Discrimination	Z60.5 Target of (perceived) adverse discrimination and persecution	Use for reported discrimination related to race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, political or religious beliefs	N/A
Legal Concerns			
Justice involvement	Z65.2 Problems related to release from prison	Use for individuals who are recently released from prison.	(#18) In the past year, have you spent more than 2 nights in a row in a jail, prison, detention center, or juvenile correctional facility? Affirmative Answer: Yes
Legal issues	Z65.3 Problems related to other legal circumstances	Use for individuals who need legal help. Applicable to arrest, child custody or support proceedings, litigation, prosecution, or otherwise justice involved.	(#3) At any point in the past 2 years, has season or migrant farm work been your or your family's main source of income? Affirmative Answer: Yes (#19) Are you a refugee? Affirmative Answer: Yes
Interpersonal Violence			
Violence exposure	Z91.41 Personal history of adult abuse	Use for clients that have experienced abuse as adults. Excludes history of abuse in childhood.	N/A

		*NOTE – this code is not billable, but the specific codes under this umbrella are.	
Intimate partner violence	+Z63.0 Problems in relationship with spouse or partner Newly Proposed for October 2021: Z60.84 Feeling unsafe in current location	<i>Add to Z91.41 if the history of adult abuse is with partner</i> Clients who specifically report relationship distress and / or abuse with spouse or intimate partner	(#21) In the past year, have you been afraid of your partner or ex-partner? Affirmative Answer: Yes
Additional PRAPARE Questions			
Stress	F43.9 Reaction to severe stress, unspecified Z73.2 Lack of relaxation and leisure Z73.3 Stress, not elsewhere classified	<i>Other SDOH Codes:</i> Z56.3 Stressful work schedule Z63.7 Other stressful life events affecting family and household	(#17) Stress is when someone feels tense, nervous, anxious, or can't sleep at night because their mind is troubled. How stressed are you? Affirmative Answers: - A little bit - Somewhat - Quite a bit - Very much
Veteran Status	Z65.5 Exposure to disaster, war, and other hostilities Z91.82 Personal history of military deployment	<i>Other SDOH Codes:</i> Z63.31 Absence of family member due to military deployment Z63.71 Stress on family due to return of family member from military deployment	(#4) Have you been discharged from the armed forces of the United States? Affirmative Answer: Yes

References/ Medical Vocabulary Databases:

[Searchable LOINC database](#)

[SNOMED CT Brower \(US edition\)](#)

[ICD-10-CM Tabular List of Diseases and Injuries \(2020\).](#)

[American Medical Association, Integrated Health Model Initiative \(IHMI\): Terminology Search Tool](#)

[Compendium of Medical Terminology Codes for Social Risk Factors – SIREN UCSF](#)

[Gravity Project: Consensus-driven standards on Social Determinants of Health](#)