

Introduction

In the past decade, there has been a growing interest in the social determinants of health. Social determinants include societal and environmental conditions such as food, housing, transportation, education, violence, social support, health behaviors and employment. Numerous studies have demonstrated a link between economic status, social factors and physical environment as key influencers in health outcomes.

Data Collection Challenges

Understanding data related to social determinants of health – including educational level, employment, or problems related to home and work environments – is critical as hospitals and health systems work to improve the health of their communities. Currently, hospitals and health systems may capture many of these social factors by utilizing the ICD-10-CM codes included in categories Z55-Z65, which identify persons with potential health hazards related to socioeconomic and psychosocial circumstances.



Despite the availability of these ICD-10-CM codes, however, recent studies show that they have been infrequently utilized in inpatient settings for discharges other than those related to mental health and alcohol/substance use. In addition, another study noted that an “obvious discrepancy exists between the number of identifiable social factors, a provider’s ability to address them and documentation with billing and diagnosis codes.”

One reason for this is that, based on the ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, coding professionals were not able to report these codes unless they were supported by physician documentation. As a result, most hospitals and health systems are unable to report these codes because societal and environmental conditions are routinely documented and addressed by non-physician providers, such as case managers, discharge planners, social workers and nurses.

What’s New

The AHA has worked to change this requirement to promote widespread use of these ICD-10-CM codes. As a result of these efforts, in early 2018, the AHA Coding Clinic published advice that allows the reporting of codes from categories Z55-Z65, based on information documented by all clinicians involved in the care of the patient. This advice was approved by the ICD-10-CM Cooperating Parties and will be incorporated into the next revision of the Official Coding Guidelines. This change is effective beginning Feb. 18, 2018.

What You Can Do

-  Hospitals and health systems should educate necessary individuals, including physicians, non-physician health care providers, and coding professionals of the important need to collect data on the social determinants of health. Utilizing these codes will allow hospitals and health systems to better track patient needs and identify solutions to improve the health of their communities.
-  As coding professionals review a patient’s medical record to identify the appropriate ICD-10-CM codes to include, they should be aware of and begin utilizing the ICD-10-CM codes included in categories Z55-Z65, listed in **Table 1**.

Additional Information

For more information, contact Nelly Leon-Chisen, RHIA, AHA director of coding and classification, at nleon@aha.org.

The AHA has developed numerous tools and resources to help hospitals and health systems address the social determinants of health in their communities. For access to these resources, please visit www.aha.org.

Table 1 ICD-10-CM Code Categories

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.