

Executive Summary

Importance of Screening for Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Screening for Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) is critical in providing holistic and effective healthcare. SDOH, such as economic stability, education, social and community context, health care access, and the neighborhood environment, significantly impact patient health outcomes. Identifying and addressing these factors can help reduce health disparities, improve patient quality of life, and enhance overall health outcomes. By systematically screening for SDOH, we can connect patients with necessary resources and interventions that address underlying social issues contributing to poor health.

Why the Initial (As-Is) Approach to Screening Failed

The initial approach to SDOH screening at ImprovingHealth was inefficient and ineffective due to several key issues:

- **Workflow Inefficiencies:** The screening was conducted using paper forms by physicians, who then manually transferred the data into Excel spreadsheets. This process was time-consuming, prone to errors, and led to low screening completion rates.
- **Role Misalignment:** Physicians were burdened with tasks better suited for other trained staff, resulting in underutilization of their skills and increased workload.
- **Technology Limitations:** Lack of integration with the Electronic Health Records (EHR) system and reliance on manual data entry hindered data accessibility and utility.

Proposed Intervention (To-Be) for Improved Screening

Our proposed intervention addresses these issues through the following improvements:

- **Streamlined Workflow:** Patients complete the SDOH screening on electronic tablets during check-in. The data is automatically entered into the EHR system, and alerts are generated for identified needs, notifying clinical staff. Nurses then review these alerts and connect patients with relevant resources.
- **Optimized Roles:** Screening responsibilities are shifted from physicians to trained administrative assistants and nurses, optimizing resource utilization and reducing physician burden.
- **Enhanced Technology:** The introduction of a Clinical Decision Support (CDS) system in the form of a calculator within the EHR facilitates real-time assessment of social needs and suggests appropriate interventions.

Comparison from Stack Analyses:

- **Workflow:** Transitioning from a paper-based to an electronic system enhances efficiency and accuracy. Integration with EHR ensures that data is accessible and actionable.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly defined roles reduce the workload on physicians and leverage the capabilities of administrative staff and nurses.

Potential Barriers to Success

Several potential barriers could impact the success of the proposed intervention:

- **Resistance to Change:** Staff may be resistant to adopting new workflows and technology.
- **Training Requirements:** Ensuring all staff are adequately trained on the new system and processes.
- **Resource Allocation:** Initial costs associated with technology upgrades and training.

Evaluation Plan for Assessing Success

To evaluate the success of the proposed changes, we will implement a comprehensive monitoring and assessment plan:

- **Completion Rates:** Track the percentage of patients completing the SDOH screening before and after implementation.
- **Data Quality and Utilization:** Monitor the accuracy of data entry and the use of SDOH data in clinical decision-making.
- **Patient Outcomes:** Assess improvements in patient health outcomes linked to addressed social needs.
- **Staff Feedback:** Collect feedback from staff regarding workflow efficiency and job satisfaction.
- **Additional Data Sources:** Utilize datasets such as County Health Rankings, NHANES, and MEPS to benchmark against regional and national data and identify trends in social needs and health outcomes.