

# USING Z CODES:

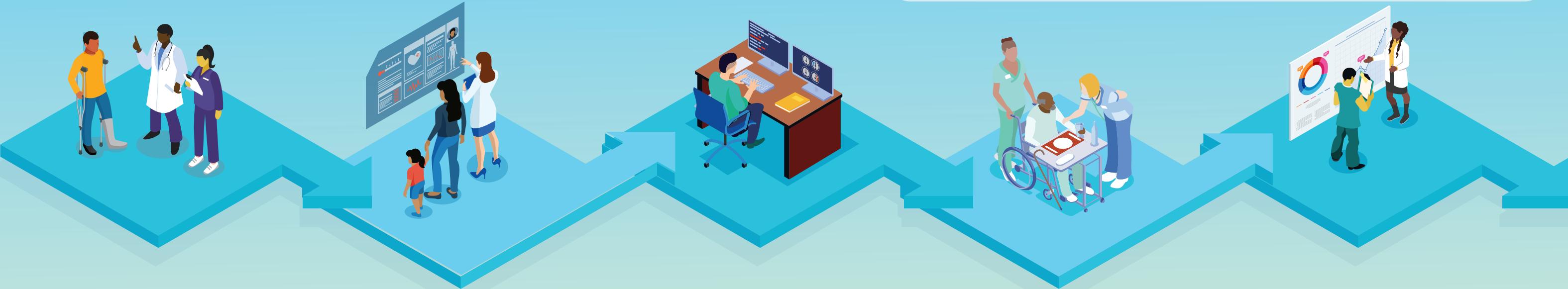
## The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

### Data Journey to Better Outcomes

#### What are **Z** codes

SDOH-related Z codes ranging from Z55-Z65 are the ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes used to document SDOH data (e.g., housing, food insecurity, transportation, etc.).

**SDOH** are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.



#### Step 1 Collect SDOH Data

**Any member of a person's care team can collect SDOH data** during any encounter.

- Includes providers, social workers, community health workers, case managers, patient navigators, and nurses.
- Can be collected at intake through health risk assessments, screening tools, person-provider interaction, and individual self-reporting.

#### Step 2 Document SDOH Data

**Data are recorded in a person's paper or electronic health record (EHR).**

- SDOH data may be documented in the problem or diagnosis list, patient or client history, or provider notes.
- Care teams may collect more detailed SDOH data than current Z codes allow. These data should be retained.
- Efforts are ongoing to close Z code gaps and standardize SDOH data.

#### Step 3 Map SDOH Data to Z Codes

**Assistance is available from the ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting.<sup>1</sup>**

- Coding, billing, and EHR systems help coders assign standardized codes (e.g., Z codes).
- Coders can assign SDOH Z codes based on self-reported data and/or information documented by any member of the care team if their documentation is included in the official medical record.<sup>2</sup>

#### Step 4 Use SDOH Z Code Data

**Data analysis can help improve quality, care coordination, and experience of care.**

- Identify individuals' social risk factors and unmet needs.
- Inform health care and services, follow-up, and discharge planning.
- Trigger referrals to social services that meet individuals' needs.
- Track referrals between providers and social service organizations.

#### Step 5 Report SDOH Z Code Data Findings

**SDOH data can be added to key reports** for executive leadership and Boards of Directors to inform value-based care opportunities.

- Findings can be shared with social service organizations, providers, health plans, and consumer/patient advisory boards to identify unmet needs.
- A **Disparities Impact Statement** can be used to identify opportunities for advancing health equity.

# USING SDOH Z CODES

Can Enhance Your Quality Improvement Initiatives



## Health Care Administrators

**Understand how SDOH data can be gathered and tracked using Z codes.**

- Select an SDOH screening tool.
- Identify workflows that minimize staff burden.
- Provide training to support data collection.
- Consider EHRs that facilitate data collection and coding.
- Decide what Z code data to use and monitor.

Develop a plan to use SDOH Z code data to:

- Enhance patient care.
- Improve care coordination and referrals.
- Support quality measurement.
- Identify community/population needs.
- Support planning and implementation of social needs interventions.
- Monitor SDOH intervention effectiveness.



## Health Care Team

**Use a SDOH screening tool.**

- Follow best practices for collecting SDOH data in a sensitive and HIPAA-compliant manner.
- Consistently document standardized SDOH data in the EHR.
- Refer individuals to social service organizations and appropriate support services through local, state, and national resources.



## Coding and Other Professionals

**Follow the ICD-10-CM coding guidelines.<sup>3</sup>**

- Use the CDC National Center for Health Statistics [ICD-10-CM Browser](#) tool to search for ICD-10-CM codes and information on code usage.<sup>4</sup>
- Assign all relevant SDOH Z codes to support quality improvement initiatives.



This list is subject to revisions and additions to improve alignment with SDOH data elements.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/icd-10/2024-icd-10-cm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/icd/icd-10-cm.htm>