

Quick Guide to Social Determinants of Health ICD-10 Codes

What are Z Codes?

- ICD-10-CM Z codes represent factors influencing health status and contact with health services that may be recorded as diagnoses.
- Codes Z-55 through Z-65 identify non-medical factors that may influence a patient’s health status.

Benefits of Using Z Codes:

- Identify social needs that impact patients and connect with community resources.
- Aggregate data across patients to determine a social determinants strategy.
- Track trends or risks in the community.
- Guide community partnerships.
- Connect social needs to claims for future financial incentives from private and government payers.



Addressing Common Barriers to Use of Z Codes

Lack of definitions for social determinants of health (SDoH) terms	The national Gravity Project is underway to lay groundwork for national standardization of definitions and data. Consider developing internal definitions for coding guidelines until national standards established.
Lack of incentives	Commercial and government payers have strong interest in identification of SDOH for reimbursement, risk adjustment, etc. Documenting Z codes in claims now develops data for future incentives.
Operational processes for screening and documenting	Consider using The Protocol for Responding to and Assessing Patients’ Assets, Risks, and Experiences, or PRAPARE tool, a standardized SDOH assessment that can be integrated into the EHR and adapted to individual workflows. PRAPARE can automatically link to appropriate ICD-10 Z codes that can be added to the diagnosis or problem list.
Lack of clarity about who can document Z codes	According to the American Hospital Association (AHA) Coding Clinic, for SDOH information such as found in Z codes 55-65, code assignment may be based on medical record documentation from clinicians involved in the care of the patient who are not the patient’s provider because this information represents social documentation rather than medical diagnoses.
Questions about documenting patient self-reported information	The 2019 AHA Coding Clinic notes that “if the patient self-reported information is signed off and incorporated into the health record by either a clinician or provider, it would be appropriate to assign codes from categories Z55-Z65 describing social determinants of health.”
Productivity challenges	AHA recommends training coders to understand the value of documenting Z codes.

Source: [American Hospital Association ICD-10-CM Coding for Social Determinants of Health](#)

Provider's Quick Guide to Social Determinants of Health ICD-10 Z Codes

ICD-10 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, 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

Per the CMS Office of Minority Health Data Highlight in January 2020, there are nine categories of Z codes related to SDoH and several sub-codes - for a total of 97 codes ([CMS, 2020](#)).

Adapted from: [ICD-10-CM Coding for Social Determinants of Health \(AHA\)](#)

References: [ICD-10Data.com](#), [ICD-10coded.com](#)

This publication was supported by the Cooperative Agreement Number NU58DP006516 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Publication number DEDPH-HD-040221