

USING Z CODES TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS PATIENT NEEDS

What are Z codes?

Z codes are ICD-10 diagnosis codes Z55 to Z65 that help document non medical factors that may influence a patient’s health status. They are used to capture Social Determinants of Health, which CMS describes as 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. Z codes are important because they help tell your patient’s entire story and may provide insight into behaviors often described as non-adherent or non-compliant.



Accurately predict your patient’s health



Properly capture risk factors



Identify Network-wide trends

Sample Z codes

EDUCATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Z55.0** Illiteracy and low-level literacy
- Z55.1** School unavailable and unattainable

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

- Z59.0** Homelessness
- Z59.2** Discord with neighbors, lodgers or landlord

FOOD

- Z59.4** Lack of adequate food

TRANSPORTATION

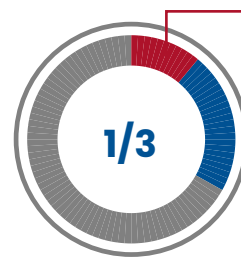
- Z59.82** Transportation insecurity

Who can Capture Z codes?

Any member of a person’s care team can collect SDoH data during a patient encounter. This includes providers, social workers, community health workers, case managers and care navigators. The information can be collected through a formal screening, self-reporting by the patient, health risk assessment or patient-provider interaction.

How are Z codes used?

Understanding the non medical factors impacting your patients can help you personalize their care. Patients often are hesitant to disclose and discuss social determinants with providers. In a 2023 pilot, NHN found that **while one-third of patients self-identified as having a social determinant, of those, only one-third wanted to discuss the issue with their provider.**



Of the 1/3 of patients who self identified as having a SDoH, only 1/3 wanted to speak to their provider.

2023 Nebraska Health Network Pilot

Properly documenting social determinants through Z codes ensures that the entire care team has a holistic view of the patient and reduces the risk of a patient needing to retell their story or vocalize their concerns with each new provider.

Collectively, Z codes help the ACO understand the social risks of our community, ensuring we have adequate support in place. Payers, including CMS, are integrating Z codes into their risk stratification analysis. By embracing this change early, we can better prepare for future documentation requirements, making our work more efficient and effective.

Z code Documentation



PATIENT: STEVE JOHNSON

AGE: 45 YEARS OLD

Current History:

- Type 2 Diabetes with Complications

Reason for Visit:

- Cough due to seasonal allergy

DOCUMENTATION NOTE:

Steve is being seen for coughing symptoms he has experienced the past two days. He has good control of his diabetes, eats healthy and exercises several times per week.

He seems stressed and is concerned about losing his job and making ends meet. He has started rationing his medications to help lower his expenses.

ROUTINE DOCUMENTATION

VS

DOCUMENTATION WITH Z CODES

E11.9	Type 2 diabetes mellitus without complications	E11.9	Type 2 diabetes mellitus without complications
R05	Cough	R05	Cough
J30.1	Allergic rhinitis due to pollen	J30.1	Allergic rhinitis due to pollen
		F43.0	Acute stress reaction
		Z56.2	Threat of job loss
		Z59.8	Other problems related to housing and economic circumstances

Additional Z codes that can be included

Z codes provide a holistic view of Steve's health.

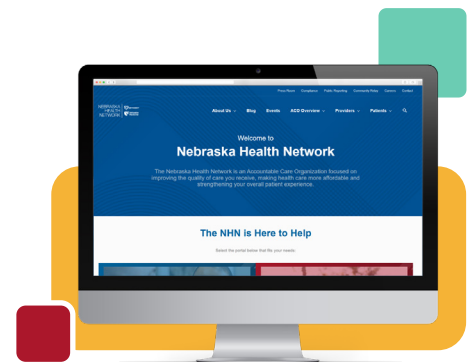
SDoH Resources

CommunityRelay.com is a free resource sponsored by the Nebraska Health Network that can be used in a clinical setting or independently by users.

Starting with a zip code, users have access to more than 550,000 different programs and services that address common Social Determinants of Health like food, housing, transportation or employment insecurities.



Visit CommunityRelay.com



Visit NebraskaHealthNetwork.com to download our Z code Pocket Guide or comprehensive Z code Reference Guide.