



Coding for Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Healthy People 2020 note the impact of social determinants of health (SDOH) on children and adults. “Health is... determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities: the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships.”ⁱ It’s further recognized that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) impact childhood development, well-being, adulthood health, and social productivity.

Primary care providers serving children and adolescents play a key role in preventing and mitigating the impacts of SDOH and ACEs. Literature on children’s health and healthcare, along with Medicaid utilization and cost data, and expert interviews with state and national child health practitioners, health system and state policy leaders suggest that value-based payment models should promote and reimburse for following the Bright Futures national screening and intervention guidelines which include SDOH and ACEs. Child health advocates also promote reimbursement for interventions that can directly address SDOH and ACEs beyond the scope of a pediatric practice. These interventions include screening parents for their SDOH, providing parental education and support, offering behavioral health services (best when co-located with primary care), and care coordination services (referrals and linkages to other clinicians and community-based behavioral, educational, and social service organizations).ⁱⁱ

We recommend that SBHCs assess, collect, code, intervene, and track their patients’ and the entire school population’s SDOH and ACEs if possible, and the interventions and care coordination they provide. In ICD 10 there are Z codes that you can use to describe the SDOH and ACEs screening and interventions you provide even if you currently do not receive reimbursement for them. Your electronic health record should include Z codes. Patient population’s Z code data combined with other diagnostic codes paints a clearer picture of the value-based services your SBHC provides. This data can empower advocacy efforts, drive change in payment reform, and position your SBHC to receive value-based payment.

The charts below include the top Z Codes we recommend using for coding SDOH and ACEs screening and interventions.

SDOH Descriptions	Z Codes
Persons with Potential Health Hazards Related to Socioeconomic and Psychosocial Circumstances (Z55-Z65)	Z55-Z65
Problems related to housing and economic circumstances	Z59
Homelessness	Z59.0
Lack of adequate food and safe drinking water [excludes effects of hunger (T73.0), inappropriate diet or eating habits (Z72.4), malnutrition (E40-E46)]	Z59.4
Inadequate housing (lack of heating, restriction of space)	Z59.1
Extreme poverty	Z59.5
Low income	Z59.6
Insufficient social insurance and welfare support	Z59.7
Acculturation difficulty	Z60.3

ACEs Descriptions	Z Codes
Personal history of abuse in childhood	Z62.81
Other personal history of psychological trauma, not elsewhere classified	Z91.49
Personal history of other mental and behavioral disorders	Z86.59
Family history of other mental and behavioral disorders	Z81.8
Child in welfare custody	Z62.21
Absence of family member due to military deployment	Z63.31
Stress on family due to return of family member form military deployment	Z63.71
Disruption of family by separation and divorce	Z63.5
Other specified problems related to primary support group (Family discord NOS, family estrangement NOS, high expressed emotional level within the family, inadequate family support, inadequate or distorted communication with family)	Z63.8
Parent-child conflict	Z62.82
Alcoholism and drug addiction in family	Z63.72
Other stressful life events affecting family and household	Z63.79
Personal history of self-harm	Z91.5
High risk heterosexual behavior	Z72.51

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy People 2020: Social Determinants of Health. 2014.

ⁱⁱ Bailit Health. Value-Based Payment Models for Medicaid Child Health Services: Report to the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and the United Hospital Fund. July 13, 2016.