

## Looking at Quality Improvement Through a Health Equity Lens

### Worksheet Instructions

Looking at quality improvement activities through a health equity lens helps us identify health-related social needs (HRSN). HRSNs are individual-level adverse social conditions that negatively affect an individual's health or healthcare.<sup>2</sup> Social determinants of health (SDOH) are defined by CDC as the *“Nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age. And the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.”*<sup>1</sup> HRSNs are frequently identified as root causes of disparities in health outcomes for individual patients, as opposed to SDOH, which are better suited for describing a population. It is important to identify and address SDOH, which often show up as HRSNs in dialysis settings. This worksheet can assist dialysis facilities with addressing HRSNs for a specific patient and SDOH for a diverse population of people at a facility level to improve health outcomes.

#### Action Steps for Facility Staff

Step 1. Choose the Quality Improvement Activity (QIA) or area of care you want to improve (hospitalizations/readmissions, transplant, home dialysis, or vaccinations). If you are a part of the PFE QIA, you can choose from one of three QIA choices (life planning, QAPI or peer mentoring). Then identify the patient population that would be focused on in the QIA (i.e., patients using the hospital for primary medical care or patients that are uninterested in kidney transplant).

Step 2. Choose one patient from the QIA population and complete a screening for HRSNs using the list provided in the table below or you can use this [Health-Related Social Needs Screening Tool](#). The idea is to identify any health-related social needs that appear to be preventing the patient from achieving optimal dialysis or other health outcomes. Choose the most impactful HRSN to work on with the patient.

Step 3. Discuss the QIA and health equity activities with the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) during monthly QAPI meetings. Determine interventions and resources to use and complete the worksheet monthly or until the HRSN has been addressed.

Step 4. Discuss the QIA interventions and resources to address the HRSN with the patient. Apply interventions with the patient's approval. Monitor and check in frequently with the patient. Identify barriers along the way and assist where needed.

Step 5. Maintain the change. Check in monthly with the patient to identify any barriers or concerns. Update the IDT, monitor the QIA for improvements based on the applied interventions and update your worksheet during this activity.

**Important Note: Addressing one HRSN can impact other HRSNs. For example, helping your patient find transportation could impact food insecurity, access to healthcare and job insecurity.**

#### References:

1. [Social Determinants of Health at CDC | About | CDC](#)
2. [r3\\_disparities\\_july2022-6-20-2022.pdf \(jointcommission.org\)](#)
3. [Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](#)

## Identification of Health-Related Social Needs

Health-Related Social Need	Definition of Health-Related Social Need
Food Insecurity	Food Insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.
Housing Insecurity	Housing insecurity is an umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience, including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing.
Transportation Insecurity	A condition in which one is unable to regularly move from place to place in a safe and timely manner because one lacks the material, economic or social resources necessary for transportation.
Racism	Racism can be defined as organized systems within societies that cause avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources, capacities, and opportunities across racial or ethnic groups.
Environmental Factors	Environment includes factors such as air quality, water quality, climate change, exposure to hazards, and access to green spaces and parks.
Inadequate Access to Healthcare	The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (formerly known as the Institute of Medicine) define access to health care as the “timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes.”
Unsafe Neighborhood	Neighborhood safety is a social determinant of health that affects the physical and mental health of people who live in places with high rates of violence, crime, and other risks.
Job Insecurity	Job insecurity is powerlessness to assure desired continuity of one’s job or job components when either the job or its components are threatened. The term job insecurity can refer not only to the potential loss of the job itself, but also to the threatened loss of key components of the job, such as supervisory activities or pay.
Economic Insecurity	Economic insecurity is living in a household with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Today one out of every 3 people in the U.S are economically insecure.
Low Education Attainment	Education is a significant social determinant that influences health over the course of a lifetime. Levels of educational attainment have been directly linked with important health outcomes such as self-rated health, infant mortality, and life expectancy.
Inadequate Health Insurance	Inadequate health insurance coverage is one of the largest barriers to health care access, and the unequal distribution of coverage contributes to disparities in health.
Limited Health Literacy	Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
Limited English Proficiency	LEP means being limited in ability or unable to speak, read and/or write the English language well enough to understand and be understood without the aid of an interpreter.

### References:

[Measuring Housing Insecurity in the American Housing Survey | HUD USER](#)  
 “Developing a New Measure of Transportation Insecurity: An Exploratory Factor Analysis.” *Survey Practice* 11 <https://doi.org/10.29115/SP-2018-0024>. Understanding Communication and Language Needs of Beneficiaries, April 2017 [Understanding Communication and Language Needs of Medicare Beneficiaries \(cms.gov\)](#), [Racism as a Determinant of Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#) [Job Security and Insecurity - IResearchNet](#) [SDOH-One-Pager-EconomicStability.pdf \(cwla.org\)](#) [Social Determinants of Health: Education - America's Essential Hospitals](#)

