

MEASURING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: STATE MEDICAID LESSONS



In their brief for the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS), Anna Spencer, Bianca Freda, Tricia McGinnis and Laura Gottlieb offer a host of recommendations on the measurement and evaluation of social needs interventions. Based on lessons learned from state-level efforts, these key insights can help healthcare delivery organizations develop their own data collection initiatives.



Develop a Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Program

Collecting data on social determinants of health can be challenging. To prepare, organizations should consider four best practices:

1. Identify SDOH priorities and associated measures
2. Outline measure specifications
3. Create a data collection mechanism
4. Make the case to health plans and providers on why collecting SDOH information is valuable



Take a Cue from State Successes

States are leading the way in tackling social determinants of health through a variety of approaches. Among the innovative models:

Oregon



- Established committee on SDOH measures for its Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs)
- Deployed a provider-level food insecurity screening measure
- Developing housing-related measures and CCO-led Coordinated Health Partnerships pilots

Washington



- Requires agencies to develop measures for housing, employment and criminal justice involvement
- Working to incorporate measures into state's clinically-oriented Common Measures Set

Massachusetts



- Developed a “neighborhood stress” measure based on beneficiary’s home address — a composite measure of economic stress that includes income, employment, education and transportation

Kansas



- Incorporated existing behavioral health, home-based and community-based measures into managed Long Term Services & Supports (LTSS) performance measures
- Evaluated data sources to ensure the state received technically sound information to guide program funding decisions



Apply SDOH Data to the Greater Population

There are a host of important reasons to establish common measures of SDOH impact. These measures...

- Enable state agencies to develop targeted patient-level interventions and population-level strategies
- Help providers drive greater and more consistent collection of individual-level SDOH information
- Inform patient-level interventions and population health management
- Improve research and evaluation for broader delivery system reform





Key Considerations to Advance SDOH Measurement

There are several key elements for any healthcare, community or policy organization to consider when seeking to advance essential needs measurement:



Develop Your Framework

- Define domains of interest
- Develop guiding principles to measure and report patient-level SDOH
- Identify how SDOH data will be used



Measure the Development & Selection Process

- Establish a standardized approach
- Use quality measurement selection and standardization as a guide
- Consider adopting already-developed assessment tools, such as [NACHC's PRAPARE tool](#) or the [Health Leads Screening Toolkit](#)



Data Collection & Sharing

- Be strategic about the level and source of SDOH data
- Consider collecting SDOH data from targeted subpopulations or a specific program first
- Develop data-sharing arrangements with relevant agencies
- Pay close attention to privacy and security concerns



Deployment

- Establish a structured approach for monitoring and evaluation
- Gather ongoing feedback on the implications of SDOH data collection
- Think across all payers before implementing new measures or screens