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EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION GROUP



# HEALTH EQUITY UPDATES

October 2023



## People with Disabilities Receive NIH Designation as a Health Disparity Population

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) has [designated](#) individuals with disabilities as a population experiencing health disparities. The designation was announced after consultation with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a review of a [report](#) by the NIMHD advisory council, and input from the disability community. This is one of several steps the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is taking to address disability-related health disparities and ensure representation in NIH research.

The CMS Office of Minority Health has [resources](#) for both providers and individuals with disabilities. The resource [Getting the Care You Need: A Guide for People with Disabilities](#), aims to empower patients with disabilities and is available in eight languages and braille. The [Primer for Providers](#) helps staff in health care settings improve quality, satisfaction, and physical accessibility for patients with physical disabilities.

## This Month

### Health Literacy Month

#healthliteracymonth



October is Health Literacy Month, an observance that was founded in 1999 by [Helen Osbourne](#). Health literacy is a crucial determinant of health and outcome. [Healthy People 2030](#) defines health literacy as “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.”

A 2018 [study](#) estimated that 77 million U.S. adults have difficulty managing their health, using the healthcare system, and following preventive guidelines. Oftentimes, people are hesitant to admit that they don’t understand information and instructions from providers. Simple misunderstandings between patient and provider can result in medication errors, avoidable ED visits and readmissions, lower rates of treatment compliance, and in some cases, increased mortality rates.

Consider taking action to help improve patient health literacy and communication with patients. The HHS Office of Minority Health has a [reading list](#) with information and resources to help promote health literacy and health equity.

## Best of CLAS

### A tip for implementing culturally and linguistically appropriate services

#### HHS National CLAS Standards – [Standard 6](#)

Inform Individuals of the Availability of Language Assistance

- Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally or in writing. The provision of language assistance services is critical to ensuring quality, safety, satisfaction, and improved outcomes.

## In the News

### [CMS Releases SDOH Z Code Infographic](#)

The CMS Office of Minority Health released a new infographic that explains how ICD-10-CM Z codes can help improve the collection of social determinants of health (SDOH) such as food insecurity and housing instability. The resource describes ways that the collection of SDOH data that is recorded in patients' medical records can improve equity in health care delivery and research. CMS also included 17 new Z codes effective October 1, 2023. Some examples are Z55.6 – *Problems related to health literacy* and Z58.8 – *Other problems related to physical environment*. New codes are also announced by the CDC and are available on the [CDC website](#).

### [Older Adult Preferences for Social Connection in Assisted Living and the Community](#)

A scoping review published in September identifies preferences of older adults related to social connectedness in assisted living facilities and the community in the U.S. The review identified that facility-based recreation and leisure resources are preferred by those living in assisted living facilities. Older adults in the community prefer participation in civic life activities, while younger adults prefer more physical activities. As expected, preferences were influenced by age, physical limitations, and the size and location of the facility. Social isolation is shown to have a negative impact on health and quality of life.

### [Gravity Project Releases Accepted SDOH Screening Assessments](#)

The Gravity Project, a national public collaborative that develops consensus-based data standards to improve the usage and sharing of information on SDOH, endorsed social risk screening instruments determined to have face validity. According to Gravity, "Using validated measures to meet health-related social risks can facilitate targeted interventions and help health systems meet the requirements of new quality measures related to social screening." The table of instruments includes 134 screening assessments, their SDOH domains, web links (if available), and the status of LOINC encoding.

### [CMS Announces Transformative Model](#)

CMS announced the States Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development Model (AHEAD), a [total cost of care](#) (TCOC) model. It aims to facilitate collaboration between CMS and states to increase investment in primary care, provide financial stability for hospitals, and support connections to community resources for beneficiaries. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is expected in late fall with an application period in spring 2024. CMS expects to award agreements to up to eight states across two application periods.



Visit the IPRO Resource Library: <https://qi-library.ipro.org>

## Upcoming Events

### [A Virtual Summit on Applying Generative AI to SDOH](#)

The Center for Health Affairs  
November 2, 2023  
1:00 – 5:00 PM ET

### [Health-Related Social Needs Affinity Group](#)

I PRO  
The second Wednesday of the month, September – February.  
12:00 – 12:30 PM ET

### [LINKS: Supporting Individuals with or at Risk for Diabetes](#)

I PRO  
November 16, 2023  
3:00 – 4:00 PM ET