

Supplemental Guidance to New Hampshire Health Care Facility Discharge Data Submission Manual for 7.3 Race and Ethnicity Data Element Reference

Provided by New Hampshire Hospital Association & New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services

The NEW HAMPSHIRE HEALTH CARE FACILITY DISCHARGE DATA SUBMISSION MANUAL provides detail on how to code for patient race and ethnicity. The challenge in getting quality patient race and ethnicity data is only partly in the coding. Data quality can be improved by increasing staff comfort asking race and ethnicity questions and patient comfort responding. Staff training and community education on why and how this data is collected by hospitals can improve patient compliance. Below are a few strategies to improve the quality of patient race and ethnicity data.

Staff Training

The following information is adapted from Health Research and Education Trust (HRET):

Staff who confidently ask patient race and ethnicity in a nonthreatening polite manner, explaining why race and ethnicity is asked, are more successful and can move quickly on with the registration process. The rationale for collecting the data that puts *staff* and *patients* most at ease is the connection to quality care. Referring to “State Requirements” is **not** good as it tends to raise concerns. Reassuring patients that this information is kept confidential is important.

Quick Script:

“We want to make sure that all our patients get the best care possible. We would like you to tell us your ethnic and racial background so that we can review the treatment that all patients receive and make sure that everyone gets the highest quality of care.”

Ethnicity Question

(Asking ethnicity before race causes less patient confusion.)

Do you consider yourself Hispanic/Latino?

Yes
No

Race Question

Which category best describes your race? You can choose more than one category:

American Indian/Alaska Native
Asian
Black or African American
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
White
Other race (free text)

If patient asks why you are asking this question or what his/her response has to do with treatment, patient registration staff can say:

“People have a personal opinion about their identity. We respect this and ask you to select as many or as few of the options as you wish. We ask this question because some racial groups may not receive all of the support and services they need in order to live healthy lives. In order for us to learn more about inequities in health, and make sure that our hospital does not discriminate on the basis of race, we need to collect this sensitive information from our patients.”

For patients who need reassurance that the information is kept confidential, staff can offer to share a copy of your privacy policy. Some patients might need further reassurance that no information is shared with immigration officials.

If a person does not want to answer these questions, or is unavailable to answer these questions, move on. Do not force the issue. Code as follows:

Declined - *This is a flag indicating that the individual did not want to answer this question—do not ask again during the same or subsequent visits.*

Unavailable/Unknown - *This is a flag indicating that the person was unavailable or could not answer the question. May ask the person again at a future visit.*

Patient self-identification provides the most consistent and valid data in comparison to observation. Patients may wish to identify themselves as more than one race. Data collection should allow for this possibility, recording multiple race responses for the same individual as needed.

Two HRET resources to train staff which are easily modifiable to your organization:

- Staff Training Presentation: www.hretdisparities.org/uploads/TRAININGSlides2009.ppt
- Grid of Actual Patient Reactions with Suggested Staff Response: www.hretdisparities.org/uploads/ResponseMatrix.ppt

Community Education

Anytime there is change in how a hospital interacts with its patients, it is important to educate the community to ease concerns. Here is a link to patient education flyer that can be posted in intake areas conveying the reason and importance for collecting race and ethnicity demographic information from hospital patients:

- <http://www.healthynh.com/images/PDFfiles/cultural-effectiveness/Hospital%20flyer%20final.doc>

Potential Benefits to Collecting Patient Race and Ethnicity Data

- Understand the racial and ethnic background of patients
- Adapt services to health and cultural needs of patients in the community
- Determine how well your staff diversity “matches” patient diversity
- Incorporate appropriate cultural responsiveness information into staff training and evaluations
- Assess and compare health data across race and ethnicity to identify disparities in utilization of services, health outcomes and satisfaction with services
- Improve the quality of health programs and services for diverse populations