



## NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

**TO:** NQF Board of Directors  
**FROM:** John Bernot, Vice President, Quality Measurement  
Elisa Munthali, Senior Vice President, Quality Measurement  
**DATE:** March 14, 2018  
**RE:** Health Equity Program Update: Framework for Medicaid Programs to address Social Determinants of Health: Food Insecurity and Housing Instability

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### REQUESTED ACTION

This is an informational update only; no Board action required.

#### **Health Equity Program Update**

NQF remains committed to reducing disparities and improving health equity through projects and other initiatives within the Health Equity Program. In support of this aim, NQF, in collaboration with CMS, recently released a new report that outlines a systematic approach for Medicaid programs to better support efforts to collect and use data about individuals' social needs and increase collaboration between communities and healthcare providers to improve beneficiaries' health.

As part of this work, NQF convened an Expert Panel representing a variety of stakeholder groups—including clinicians, researchers, health plans, health systems, and consumer advocates—to provide strategic guidance to Medicaid programs on collecting and using data about social needs that impact health. The panel focused on food insecurity and housing instability as key areas for which Medicaid programs can support data collection efforts in the short term, given the growing body of evidence linking food insecurity and housing instability to negative health outcomes.

The Expert Panel suggests that state Medicaid programs support collection of social needs data that impact health by strengthening linkages between communities and healthcare systems, facilitating the exchange of information, leveraging payment models, and incentivizing the discovery of new ways to deliver care. With input from the public, NQF members, and key informants (i.e., individuals in leadership roles in organizations working to mitigate the incidence and impact of food insecurity and housing instability), the panel specifically recommends that Medicaid programs:

- Acknowledge that Medicaid has a role in addressing social needs that impact health
- Create a comprehensive, accessible, routinely updated list of local community resources for healthcare organizations
- Harmonize tools that assess social needs that impact health to ensure that they collect and document the same type of information
- Create standards for inputting and extracting social needs data from electronic health records to strengthen information sharing between health and non-health providers and programs
- Increase information sharing between government agencies
- Expand the use of waivers and demonstration projects to begin to learn what works best for screening and addressing social needs that impact health.



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In addition to this recent publication, NQF continues to pursue projects and initiatives that support the Health Equity Program in the areas of sociodemographic risk adjustment, health equity quality measurement, and best practices that have the potential to reduce disparities and improve health equity.