



NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM—Risk Adjustment for Sociodemographic Factors Trial Period Guidance for Measure Developers

Background Information on the Trial Period

- The NQF Board of Directors approved a two-year trial period for risk adjustment for sociodemographic factors prior to a permanent change in NQF policy.
- During the trial period, the NQF policy that restricted use of SDS factors in statistical risk models has been suspended and NQF is implementing several of the [Risk Adjustment Expert Panel's recommendations](#).

Instructions for Providing Required Information during the NQF SDS Trial Period

- Enter patient-level sociodemographic variables that were available and analyzed during measure development in Section 1.8 of the Measure Testing Attachment. These variables could include:
 - Patient-reported data (e.g., income, education, language)
 - Proxy variables when sociodemographic data are not collected from each patient (e.g., based on patient address and use of census tract data to assign individual patients to a category of income, education, etc.) and conceptual rationale for use
 - Patient community characteristics (e.g., crime rate, percent vacant housing, smoking rate, level of uninsurance) assigned to individual patients for the specific community where they live (not in the community in which the healthcare unit is located)
- Enter the conceptual description (logical rationale or theory informed by literature and content experts) of the causal pathway between the patient sociodemographic factors, patient clinical factors, quality of care, and outcome in Section 2b4.3 of the Measure Testing Attachment
- Enter the analyses and interpretation resulting in decision to include or not include SDS factors in section 2b4.4b of the Measure Testing Attachment. This analysis could include:
 - Variation in prevalence of the factor across measured entities
 - Empirical association with the outcome (univariate)
 - Contribution of unique variation in the outcome in a multivariable model
 - Assessment of between-unit effects vs. within-unit effects to evaluate potential clustering of disadvantaged patients in lower quality units
- Enter reliability and validity testing for the measure as specified in Section 2a2 and 2b2 of the Measure Testing Attachment.
 - If changing from a non-SDS-adjusted risk adjustment model to one that is SDS-adjusted, then **updated** reliability and validity testing is required and must be entered into section 2a2 and 2b2 of the Measure Testing Attachment.
- Enter a comparison of performance scores with and without SDS factors in the risk adjustment model in Section 2b6 of the Measure Testing Attachment.
 - In Section 2b6.1, enter the method of testing conducted to compare performance scores with and without SDS factors in the risk adjustment model for the same entities. Describe the steps and the statistical approach used.

- o In Section 2b6.2, enter the statistical results from testing the differences in the performance scores with and without SDS factors in the risk adjustment model. (e.g., correlation, rank order)
- o In Section 2b6.3, provide an interpretation of your results in terms of the differences in performance scores with and without SDS factors in the risk adjustment model for the same entities. What do the results mean and what are the norms for the test conducted?
- o NOTE: If the measure has more than one set of specifications/instructions (e.g., one for medical record abstraction and one for claims data), then section 2b6 must **also** be used to demonstrate comparability of the performance scores.
- If a performance measure includes SDS variables in its risk adjustment model, the measure developer must provide the information required to stratify a clinically-adjusted only version of the measure results for those SDS variables in section S.12 in the Measure Submission Form. This information should include *the stratification variables, definitions, specific data collection items/responses, code/value sets, and the risk-model covariates and coefficients for the clinically-adjusted version of the measure when appropriate.*
- Enter the details of the final statistical risk model and variables in Sections S.14 and S.15 of the Measure Submission Form.