

# The Patient Perspective: Social Determinants of Health Screenings in the Medical Setting

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are defined as conditions in which people are born, grow, work live, and age, including the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life<sup>1,2</sup>. Lack of patient engagement around the content and approach to care conversations related to SDOH can negatively impact healthcare experiences and exacerbate disparities in outcomes. To better understand patient perspectives and experiences in SDOH screenings, we conducted focus groups among individuals with a history of chronic or life-threatening illnesses in the United States.

Our focus groups found that screenings should be designed to be personal to patients with practitioners prepared to provide essential services and assistance tailored to their needs. Also, it is important to patients for practitioners to collaborate, but there needs to be an emphasis on safety and security when sharing medical records. A key lesson that emerged from the focus groups is the importance of integrating all aspects of SDOH screening into existing practices without creating a perception that it is something “special” or “additional.”

To appropriately build efficient SDOH screening practices, practitioners need to take the necessary steps to create a universal tool used by trained, empathetic, and time- orientated health workers who can resourcefully assist patients with the burdens of their social needs.

## Factors Influencing SDOH Screening Experience

### Interactions with Non-Medical Providers



Patient interactions and experiences with social workers and insurance providers and the resources they provide.

### Trust and Communication

Patients' trust in their providers and their expectations of communication during SDOH screenings and follow-up



### Patient Experiences



The circumstances and experiences with providers that influence SDOH needs, medical care, and needs navigation.

### Screening & Follow-up Processes

The details and characteristics of SDOH screenings and follow-up that influence SDOH identification, social need disclosure, and assistance.



#### References:

1. World Health Organization. Social Determinants of Health. World Health Organization. Published 2023. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1)
2. Friedman N. Toward Addressing Social Determinants of Health: A Health Care System Strategy. The Permanente Journal. 2018;22(18-095). doi:<https://doi.org/10.7812/tpp/18-095>