SOCIAL DETERMINANTS of Health 101

What are social determinants of health? SDoH are becoming increasingly popular—and significant—to health and human services. The first step to incorporating SDoH in your own organizations and programs is to understand what SDoH means and how it is relevant to your work.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

The term social determinants of health (or SDoH for short) has become a buzz word in the health and human services realm.

But what exactly are they?

The CDC defines SDoH as the "conditions where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality of life risks and outcomes." Put simply, they consist of factors besides healthcare that impact our health. Check out the infographic on the right for a breakdown of SDoH examples.

While these determinants are broad, they have very important implications for our health.

WHY ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH IMPORTANT?

Understanding what SDoH are is only part of the equation. What makes them so important?

Although they are not historically included with health care, they are some of the strongest predictors of an individual's health. SDoH can provide a missing puzzle piece to healthcare outcomes, creating more successful solutions.

Researchers at the Weill Cornell Medicine found that SDoH can help doctors more accurately predict fatal coronary heart disease in their patients. By looking at the social factors facing these individuals, such as access to transportation and civic participation, medical experts could better assess the *whole person*.

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What are Social Determinants of Health?

According to the CDC, SDoH are: **"the conditions where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality of life risks and outcomes."**

They are the **non-medical factors** that influence our health outcomes.

There are five Key Areas of SDoH

1 HEALTHCARE ACCESS AND QUALITY

How easy is it for someone to access healthcare? What financial barriers may stand in the way? Determinants in this category include: **healthcare, primary care, insurance coverage**, and **health literacy**.

2 EDUCATION ACCESS AND QUALITY

Education is one of the strongest predictors of individual and community health. Determinants in this category include: **high school graduation, higher education, language and literacy**, and **childhood development**.

3 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Not all communities have a sense of togetherness. Communitiy cohesion can play a big part in health. Determinants in this category include: **civic participation, discrimination, workplace conditions**, and **incarceration**.
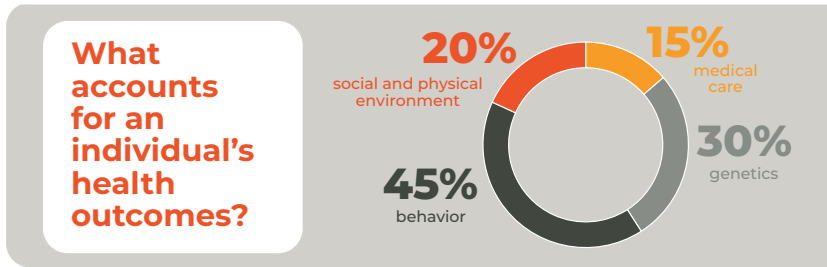
4 ECONOMIC STABILITY

Individuals who are economically insecure may have added difficulty in addressing their health needs. Determinants in this category include: **income, living cost, poverty, housing, socioeconomic status**, and **food security**.

5 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhoods play a big part in assessing health. Where someone lives can make a big difference. Determinants in this category include: **access to transportation, healthy foods, air and water quality**, and **local crime and violence**.

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Some experts argue that lower health outcomes in the US may be due to our "medicalized" approach. While we focus on medical interventions, our systems traditionally ignore other factors that can have a much larger impact on health outcomes.

What accounts for an individual's health outcomes?

20% social and physical environment

15% medical care

30% genetics

45% behavior

The American Action Forum reports that, although 95% of health spending goes toward medical care, it only accounts for about 15% of an individual's health. Social and physical environment, key pieces of SDoH, make up 5 percentage points more of our health than traditional care. When you consider that personal behavior can be directly impacted by social determinants, SDoH can influence as much as 65% of total health.

HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

With a bigger perspective on what SDoH are and why they are important, we next ask ourselves: how can we incorporate them into our organizations?

Look through the infographic on your right for five ways to do exactly that.

Eccovia is committed to using SDoH to better health and human services, which is why our case management platform ClientTrack™ is an industry leader for SDoH. We help programs record SDoH data, analyze it in meaningful ways, and coordinate with other community services to maximize impact.

The more we understand about SDoH, the more effective our programs can become. Using SDoH helps create a more substantial whole person care approach, which in turn better serves each individual.

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How to incorporate Social Determinants of Health?

Consider using the five steps below to assess how well your program uses SDoH and what you can do to make them a more central part of your organization.

The **Five A's** of Incorporating SDoH:

1 AWARENESS
Begin by identifying the social factors and risks of the populations you serve. What SDoH are you already addressing, and which ones need more attention?

2 ADJUSTMENT
Once you know where you're at, you can begin making adjustments. What parts of your clinical care can you adjust to better address SDoH? It's okay to start small.

3 ASSISTANCE
The next step is to begin connecting patients with social needs to programs and resources. For SDoH that you don't directly address, learn which organizations in your community do.

4 ALIGNMENT
This is where you can begin working on a bigger, community-wide picture. How can you better invest in local services? What can you do to align with community efforts? Coordination is key.

5 ADVOCACY
Advocacy starts when we work together. Ensuring proper focus on SDoH means forming alliances with other providers and social care organization. Together, you can advocate for SDoH!