

## Appendix E: Overview: Documenting Patients' Disability Status in the Electronic Health Record

### Why is it important to collect patients' disability status?

- (1) To identify and address potential disparities in care, patients' disability status needs to be systematically and accurately documented.
- (2) Health care organizations are required to provide patients with disabilities accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. To provide these resources, health care organizations first need to ask patients if they have a disability.

### What are the requirements for documenting disability status?

Section 4302 of the ACA requires the collection of disability status by organizations that receive federal funding. The Department of Justice states that health care organizations need to collect disability status in order to identify patients who require accommodations.

### How does disability relate to other patient characteristics?

Disability is a patient-reported demographic characteristic like race, ethnicity, preferred language, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. Processes for documenting other patient demographics should incorporate documentation of disability status.

### Can a clinician assess a patient's disability status?

Disability status must be patient-reported. Disability status is different than a clinical assessment that is used to inform care provision.

### Will we offend patients by asking about their disability status?

In multiple research studies, patients report little discomfort in disclosing a disability.

### How much work is it to ask patients about their disability status?

In a study in which a screener question followed by 6 disability status questions were asked during registration, call times increased by 18 seconds. Other methods for collection such as intake forms or the patient portal are potentially more time efficient for staff and providers.

### Sample questions:

Disability Category	Patient-Centered Disability Questionnaire
Hearing	Are you deaf, or do you have serious difficulty hearing?
Vision	Are you blind, or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?
Cognition	Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
Mobility	Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
Activities of Daily Living (ADL)/Fine Motor	Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?
Communication	Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating (for example, understanding or being understood)?
General screener	Due to a disability, do you need any additional assistance or accommodations during your visit?

