



## **Health-Related Social Needs vs The Social Determinants of Health**

The term "Health-Related Social Needs" is sometimes used interchangeably with the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), but an important distinction can be made.

HRSN refers to the social and economic needs that individuals experience that affect their ability to maintain their health and well-being. They include things such as housing instability, housing quality, food insecurity, employment, personal safety, lack of transportation and affordable utilities, and more.

SDOH, on the other hand, refers to the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age that are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources and impacted by factors such as institutional bias, discrimination, racism, and more.

In a way, disparities in HRSN can be understood as a *result* of the Social Determinants of Health. Addressing the conditions in which people live and their underlying factors is often out of scope for primary care practices. However, clinics *can* take steps to address the resulting health-related social needs through understanding which ones their unique patients face, referring them to local community services, partnering with community-based organizations, or coming up with other creative interventions.

Pages 73-76 of the [PCPCH Technical Assistance Guide](#) describe how primary care practices can improve their patients' health through addressing HRSN. Our [Resources & Technical Assistance](#) webpage also hosts other resources for meeting Standard 3.D such as an Extra Guidance Two-Pager, a PCPCH Webinar, and a Learning Collaborative Series.

# Health-Related Social Needs

