



Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS)
Quarterly Submitter Forum Summary

Date:	December 12, 2024	Location:	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Start Time:	11:00 AM	End Time:	12:00 PM

Meeting Panelists	Optum Government Solutions: Jennifer Commerford, Aravind Gangaiah, Alan Scantlen, Marianne Altomare SPARCS Program: John Sullivan, Janet Nguyen, Michele Van Epps, David Marinik, Cassandra Skinner
Agenda	• Guest Speaker: Benjamin Baskin, MPH – Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention. ◦ Topic: Improving Facility Reporting of SPARCS Race and Ethnicity Data • Open Discussion ◦ New ECC Ticketing Portal ◦ Planned Edit Updates ▪ Birth Weight ▪ Unacceptable Primary Diagnosis • Reference Section ◦ SPARCS Support ◦ New SPARCS Portal • SPARCS Reminders
Summary	<u>Guest Speaker</u> - Ben Benjamin Baskin, MPH – Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention. Improving Facility Reporting of SPARCS Race and Ethnicity Data • The use-cases of submitting SPARCS data were presented, including: ◦ Hospital financial rate setting ◦ Developing and evaluating policy ◦ Research ◦ Health planning and resource allocation ◦ Quality of care assessment ◦ Surveillance ◦ Utilization review ◦ Health equity assessment • Accurate SPARCS Race and Ethnicity data are critical for addressing health equity in New York State. These data are used at the state and local level to: ◦ Identify population-level health disparities ◦ Identify disparities in service delivery ◦ Conduct patient outcomes analysis and other research • The differences between “Race” and “Ethnicity” were presented, highlighting how a lack of understanding in the definitions frequently leads to inferior quality of data submitted. ◦ Examples highlighting differences between % of R9 claims and % of E9 Claims were presented and discussed, were optimally, % of E9 claims should be low. • To better improve Race and Ethnicity data submissions, there are planned federal level changes to be made. ◦ SPARCS Is following changes at the federal level very closely.



- Best practices for Race and Ethnicity Data Collection were presented, including:
 - Require the asking of Race and Ethnicity for all patients.
 - Asking Ethnicity question before Race can reduce confusion for Hispanic patients and increase ethnicity question response rate.
 - Do not assume Race/Ethnicity by appearance – patient (or caregiver) should self-identify.
 - Patients can decline to answer. For SPARCS, the correct response for this is “Unknown” – R9 and/or E9.
 - Only use R9 when Race is not asked, answer is refused, or answer is “Other” or “Unknown.”
 - Keep “Multi-Racial” and “Other” categories separate – do not combine. SPARCS can process multiple races.
 - If R9 is used for Race, one can still specify Ethnicity, and vice versa.
 - With large Hispanic populations, the R9 response may be unavoidably large (Other/Unknown Race).
- Available resources available for education on Race and Ethnicity collections were presented, including:
 - [Advancing Healthcare Excellence and Inclusion](#) - Healthcare Assoc. of NY State (HANYS)
 - [AHA Disparities Toolkit](#) - American Hospital Association, Institute for Diversity and Health Equity
 - [Race and Ethnicity Data Improvement Toolkit](#) - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
 - [Dalio Center for Health Justice](#) - NY Presbyterian
 - [Race, Ethnicity and Language \(REaL\) Data](#) - Community Health Care Association of New York State

Open Discussion

New ECC Ticketing Portal

- Submitters must be registered on the Hub for tickets to be visible.
- Link for registering for the Hub is: <https://customercare.optum.com>
- A One Healthcare Id is required for registration.
- Tickets can be opened directly through the Hub, and can also still be opened by calling 1.866.OPTUMGO (1.866.678.8646).
- Facilities will need to be able to accept secure files from customercare_oi@optum.com.
- If facilities are not receiving email attachments due to strict IT policies, Optum recommends they register for the Hub, as attachments can always be retrieved from it.

Planned Edit Updates

Birth Weight Edit – N0010

- *Current Message:* For newborn patients with inpatient place of service, a whole number birthweight between 200 and 12500 must be reported.
- *Updated Message:* For newborn patients with inpatient place of service, a whole number birthweight between 150 and 12500 must be reported.



Unacceptable Primary Diagnosis – N0005

- Edit Message: Unacceptable principal diagnosis code for inpatient claim type.
- CMS includes 'Z' diagnosis codes (factors influencing health status and contact with health services) in their list of unacceptable principal diagnosis codes. These 'Z' diagnosis codes will be removed from SPARCS edit N0005 for FY2024 and FY2025.

Reference Section

• **SPARCS Support**

- Facilities or vendors who submit data to SPARCS can email SPARCS.Submissions@health.ny.gov regarding:
 - New facility portal set up.
 - SPARCS submitter provisioning requests.
 - Updated SPARCS Coordinators or Contacts.
 - SPARCS Compliance questions and exception or extension requests.
 - SPARCS Policy questions.
- SPARCS.Submissions@health.ny.gov should **not** be confused with the SPARCS Requests email address which is for people who are requesting research data from SPARCS.
- PHI must **never** be sent in any email communications, and any screenshots or reports containing PHI must be fully redacted. Such redacted screenshots and reports should only be shared if necessary.

• **New SPARCS Portal**

- Facilities or vendors who submit data to SPARCS should submit help desk tickets through the portal for Optum support. Support can include:
 - Portal training and claim testing
 - File or record rejections
 - Interpretation of edit error reports
 - Technical issue or questions
- Optum can be reached at: (866) 678-8646, *Option #2*.

SPARCS Reminders

• **Rules for Data Submissions**

- Data Submission files should only contain data for a single PFI.
- Files submitted through SFTP must begin with "FAC" followed by your PFI.
- The original filename must be limited to 89 characters.
- If submitting directly through the portal, files must not exceed a size of 5MB.

• **Recommendations for Data Submission**

- If submitting through SFTP try to keep files under 10MB.
- Avoid submitting files between 12:00AM - 1:00am (EST).
- Avoid submitting large files simultaneously.

• **Compliance**

- [Extension and Exception Request Template Update](#)
- All fields are required and must be completed.
- Exceptions can be granted only when facilities can certify all data were submitted and accepted.
- Extensions require submission plans with an expected timeline for completion.