Frequently Asked Questions for Community Leaders on Data Collection in Hospitals across New York State

When will this requirement go into effect?

As of January 2014, in efforts to meet the federal standards of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), commonly called the Affordable Care Act (ACA), NYS is requiring all NYS hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers across NYS to collect expanded race and ethnicity data from each patient.

Why are these questions being asked?

To provide better health services and outcomes, hospitals need some basic information from patients; this includes address, age, gender, race and ethnicity. Improved/expanded collection of this information will allow hospitals and facilities to gain a better understanding of the patients and communities they serve and provide tailored health services to meet the individual needs of patients. This approach will help to address the differences in health outcomes they may face and ultimately improve health outcomes.

Why am I being asked about my race and ethnicity?

Culture, language, socio-economic status, age, gender, race and ethnicity influence how an individual receives and/or utilizes healthcare. Providers’ knowledge of these identifiers will allow them to better close healthcare gaps and inform programs and policies to improve the health of all New Yorkers.

What does race and ethnicity have to do with health?

Although every individual shares similarities, our racial and ethnic backgrounds may place us at differing risks for some diseases. We can work to reduce these risks by ensuring that everyone gets appropriately tailored and high quality health care.

Is this legal?

Yes, collection of this information is a requirement of Section 4302 of the Affordable Care Act. The law requires that once these data collection standards are established; they be used to enhance the ability of the public health and healthcare systems to identify and track disparities in health and healthcare, and to create greater accountability for reducing these disparities.

What will the information be used for?

The information will be used to identify any differences in health and healthcare among different populations and to provide the best possible care.
Frequently Asked Questions for Community Leaders on Data Collection in Hospitals across New York State

Who will see this information?

This information will be kept private and confidential and is protected by law. The only people who will see this information are members of the health care team and others who are authorized to see the medical record.

What if a person has a concern about their immigration status when being asked about race and ethnicity?

The race and ethnicity questions are not being asked to identify or determine immigration status; responses to the questions will not be reported to the authorities.

How will the hospitals collect this information?

Hospital staff will ask patients to self-identify either verbally or by having the patient fill out a form. This may happen at registration or admission depending upon the hospital system.

*Self-identification is when an individual provides information about how they personally see themselves in regards to demographic information such as: gender, race and ethnicity.

What can I do as a Community Leader to help?

Community leaders and organizations can help reduce barriers to collecting race and ethnicity data by having discussions with community members about why these data are being collected, why it is important for hospitals to collect this information and what to community members can expect when they go to the hospital.