

REL Collection Policy: Collecting REL data from individuals under 18

Addendum to Handbook on the Collection of Race/Ethnicity/Language Data in Medical Groups

While the collection of race/ethnicity/language (REL) and country of origin data has been explained in detail in the *Handbook for the Collection of Race, Ethnicity, Language Data in Medical Groups*, the issue of collecting this information from children under the age of 18 has not been specifically examined.

This addendum seeks to explore the issue of collecting REL data from children under 18, demonstrate current methods for collecting this data as well as present sample questions for collecting this data and FAQs for circumstances that medical groups may experience in the clinical setting.

Background

The scope of research on best practices for collecting REL data from individuals in health care settings has widened and now includes a detailed evidenced based set of instructions for carrying this work out in a clinic setting. While the HRET Toolkit and the MNCM *Handbook on the Collection of Race/Ethnicity/Language Data in Medical Groups* has examined in detail how to ask these questions to adults in clinic settings, literature and research reviews examining the issue of collecting the data from children has yet to yield a set of best practices. However, as medical groups themselves as well as researchers in the field have examined this issue, a set of recommendations has emerged. It includes:

- A parent or legal guardian should provide the information for minors using the same general approach as when an individual over 18 years old self-reports his/her race. It may be necessary to re-word the questions (See “Sample Questions for Collecting REL Data from Parents/Guardians for children or individuals under the age of 18”).
- In situations where a teen schedules their own appointment and does not have a guardian present to answer the questions, self identification of REL and country of origin status is acceptable using the same guidelines or sample questions demonstrated in the Handbook.

Sample Questions for Collecting REL Data from Parents/Guardians for children or individuals under the age of 18

Race/Ethnicity

Please tell me the race/ethnicity that describes your child.

Language

In what language can we best serve you and your child?

This field can also be populated based on the “language” or “interpreter needed” selected for the parent.

Country of Origin:

Please tell me in what country was your child born?

Frequently Asked Questions/Scenarios for Collecting REL data from Children

Does country of origin refer to the country the parents were born in or the country the child was born in?

- Country of origin refers to the country the patient was born in. If a clinic would like to collect a more granular level of data, they are free to add an additional question to the intake form to identify the country of origin of the parents, but this should be an additional question and should not replace the country of origin identification for the patient (or child).

If the questions are asked on an intake form instead of in person or over the phone while scheduling an appointment who should fill out the form?

- Parents/Guardians should fill out the form for individuals under the age of 18. If a teen attends an appointment alone, it is appropriate to have them fill out the form.

What if a parent asks not to list one of the country of origin, race, ethnicity, or language categories for their child?

- Choose the “Chose not to Answer” option.

What if a child was born on a US Military Based in another country?

- Choose the “United States” as the country of origin.

**For additional Frequently Asked Questions, see the *Handbook on the Collection of Race/Ethnicity/Language Data in Medical Groups*.