

# FLIP•THE•SCRIPT

## collecting race & ethnicity data in LINKS

To evaluate and address health and healthcare disparities, collecting information in LINKS on patients' race and ethnicity is crucial. Race and ethnicity data in LINKS is used to ensure all populations in Louisiana are receiving equitable distribution of vaccines. But how should providers gather such potentially sensitive information? Studies have shown that:

- **most patients are uncomfortable being asked about racial information**, even though most agree hospitals and clinics should document the racial and ethnic makeup of their patients.
- patients feel more at ease if they know **why this information is being collected**.
- patients feel more comfortable when the **information is gathered from doctors and nurses**.

### WHY DO WE COLLECT DATA ON RACE & ETHNICITY IN LINKS?

- **Identify disparities and differences**
- **Target interventions to address gaps**
- **Improve quality of care and service for all**
- **Maintain accreditation**
- **Ensure federal compliance**

### SAMPLE SCRIPT

“ We want to make sure that we identify and address each patient's needs to ensure that all our patients get the best care possible. I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself such as: name, age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

This information will be updated in your immunization records in LINKS and will remain confidential between you and your provider. ”

### KEY POINTS

- As a provider, you should **never “eyeball” a patient**. Just because a patient's looks favor a certain race or ethnic background, doesn't mean that they are. By doing this you are gathering inaccurate data.
- It is just as important to **update patient demographics** at check-ins for existing patients as it is for new patients. However, simply asking “is all your information the same?” doesn't do the trick. For example, you can ask an existing patient what their current address is, then compare the address said with the address listed in the system to see if they match. If not, update the address on file. Continue going through the patient's demographics to make sure all information is filled in correctly and up-to-date.
- Make sure the **patient clearly understands why it is important to gather data on race and ethnicity**.

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### ADDRESSING PATIENT CONCERNS

#### **“CAN’T YOU TELL BY LOOKING AT ME?”**

We think it is better to let patients tell us. I’m trained not to make assumptions, and I don’t want to put in the wrong answer.

#### **“I’M HUMAN.” or “IT’S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.”**

If you don’t want to answer, I understand. We ask because it’s important information for us to collect data in LINKS to ensure all populations are receiving equitable distribution of vaccines.

#### **“WHY DO YOU CARE? WE ARE ALL HUMAN BEINGS.”**

Many studies from around the country have shown that a patient’s race and ethnicity can influence the treatment they receive. We want to make sure this doesn’t happen here, so we use this information to check and make sure that everyone is getting the best care possible. That way if we find a problem, we can fix it.

#### **“ARE YOU TRYING TO FIND OUT IF I’M A U.S. CITIZEN?”**

No, definitely not! You should know that the confidentiality of what you say is protected by law, and we DO NOT SHARE this information with anyone.

#### **“WHO LOOKS AT THIS INFORMATION?”**

This remains in the hands of healthcare professionals. The only people who see this information are registration staff, administrators for the hospital, regional immunization staff, and the people involved in quality improvement.

### WHY WE ASK ETHNICITY: HISPANIC ORIGIN

We ask whether someone is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin to create statistics about this ethnic group. Hispanic origin statistics are used in planning and evaluating healthcare programs and policies to ensure they fairly serve the needs of each community and to monitor against discrimination.

Though many respondents expect to see a Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish answer category on the race questions, this question is asked separately because people of Hispanic origin may be of any race(s).