

Attachment 3a – NHIS Survey Content Justification

The content of the NHIS consists of four types: 1) annual core content that appears every year; 2) rotating core content that appears with fixed periodicity and supplements the content on the annual core; 3) sponsored content of interest to funding partners and which needs more in-depth treatment; and 4) emerging content that addresses issues of growing interest to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Annual Core Content

Annual core content covers demographics and five major health domains: chronic conditions, functioning and disability, health insurance, health care access and use and health-related behaviors.

Chronic Conditions: Chronic diseases are a significant public health problem, which result in morbidity, mortality, disability, and decreased quality of life. Chronic diseases represented seven of the top 10 causes of death in the United States in 2014. These data can help to describe the burden of chronic disease and risk factors, as well as identify research gaps, monitor population trends, and guide program evaluation.

Functioning and Disability: Limitations in physical and cognitive functioning have long been recognized as major health issues. With an aging and increasingly diverse population, the need to better understand functioning and disability is imperative since it is higher among elderly, minority, and economically disadvantaged persons. The 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) also underscored the need for clear and objective data on disabilities in the population. The Washington Group questions on functioning and disability assess whether the respondent has a disability based on their responses to questions that assess difficulties with universal basic activities rather than by asking them to identify as having a disability. This approach is consistent with that of the international Sustainable Development Goals, which outline major goals for policy formulation and program planning.

Health Insurance: Since 1990, the NHIS has collected extensive health insurance information on an annual basis. These data are particularly needed by policy analysts to evaluate the impact of changes to health care delivery and financing. Health insurance is critical to maintaining health and treating disease while protecting people from unexpected, high medical costs. Having up-to-date information about who has health insurance and what kind is a mission critical component of the NHIS.

Health Care Access and Use: Changes to the U.S. health care delivery system have focused attention on the need for data to assess the types and sources of health care being utilized as well as barriers to obtaining needed health care. The data collected can be used to monitor progress towards goals in preventive care utilization, and to examine disparities in utilization by socioeconomic characteristics. This information is important to those making decisions about

allocation of health care resources and for evaluating the impact of changes to health care delivery and financing.

Health-Related Behaviors: Key concepts in health behavior are incorporated into the Sample Adult and Sample Child annual and rotating core modules. Some behaviors are monitored annual (e.g. cigarette smoking) to provide data to monitor DHHS Agency Priority Goals. Others are monitored periodically (e.g. alcohol use, physical activity, sleep) to allow for the study of relationships between these behaviors and chronic disease outcomes. These data may also be used to evaluate the impact of programs impacting aimed at changing these behaviors.

Demographics: As in the past, the NHIS will collect information on socio-economic and demographic characteristics of adult and child survey participants. One of the well-recognized and longstanding strengths of the NHIS is its ability to allow examination of health measures by a number of demographic and economic variables.

Rotating Core Content

Rotating content provides information on topics periodically over time. This includes content on the utilization of mental, dental and other health services, mental health and psychological distress assessments, data about other health conditions, preventative services, recent injuries. Information is collected about the Sample Adult's employment, and pain. Rotating content also includes information about stressful life events that occurred in the Sample Child's lifetime.

Sponsored Content

Sponsored content and emerging content are evaluated on an annual basis according to criteria described in the Supporting Statement A in the section entitled "Adding Questions to the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS): Guidance for Sponsor."

Emerging Content

Emerging content addresses issues of growing interest to the Department of Health and Human Services. In the past, emerging content has included questions on prescription opioid use and pain management.