

DRAFT

Washington State Department of Health

Washington Emergency Medical Services Information System (WEMISIS)

Guideline for Reporting Race

December 2024

Background

[RCW 70.168.090](#) authorizes the department to adopt rules requiring licensed ambulance and aid services to report and furnish patient encounter data to the electronic emergency medical services data system.

[WAC 246-976-455](#) lists data reporting requirements for licensed ambulance and aid services including required fields and record inclusion criteria.

Included in the required fields is “Race”.

Race has been included as a required field for the following reasons:

- 1) Use of race information to identify health disparities and inequities in care and care access that may be addressed through policies, protocols or public health or system interventions
- 2) Alignment with state and department goals to promote health equity

Concerns have been raised from EMS services and providers regarding the requirement to collect the race of the patient. Reasons for these concerns have included:

- 1) The potential for disruption to provision of emergency care
- 2) Instigation of negative interaction with patients
- 3) The inability to capture patient race due to patient incapacitation
- 4) Hesitancy of provider to approximate race out of concern for incorrect assessment

Guidance:

EMS providers should report race WEMIS field: [ePatient.14](#) – Race or the corresponding field within another NEMIS compliant ePCR system.

The field is required in both [WAC 246-976-455](#) and the [National EMS Information System \(NEMIS\) standard 3.5](#).

Currently the NEMIS standard (v3.5.0) allows users to enter “Not Applicable” or “Not Recorded” as an alternative when the race of the patient is not obtained

In January 2025, NEMIS plans to release [v3.5.1](#) of their data standard, updating multiple data fields from the 2024 released v3.5.0. As part of this release the ePatient.14 – Race will be updated to include three additional options to use when the patient race is not obtained: “Refused” | “Unresponsive” | “Unable to Complete”

Under NEMIS v3.5.0, EMS providers may report the patient race as “Not Applicable” or “Not Recorded” if it is not obtainable for reasons determined by the provider.

After full implementation of NEMIS v3.5.1 (date TBD), EMS providers are required to report either the race of the patient or “Refused”, “Unresponsive” or “Unable to Complete” if the race is not obtainable for reasons determined by the provider.

Rationale:

While WEMIS requires EMS services to report race to inform health equity initiatives and identify health disparities across the state, EMS providers are not always able to accurately obtain this information in a manner that is not disruptive to care or cooperation of the patient. WEMIS seeks to optimize data collection in a way that does not interfere with patient care quality.

In collecting race information from a patient during an emergency response, it is ultimately at the discretion of the EMS provider whether it is feasible to do so. In instances where an EMS provider determines that this information is not feasible to collect, one of the three pertinent negative options must be reported: “Refused”, “Unresponsive”, or “Unable to Complete”.

Recording race as “Not Applicable” or “Not Recorded” will not be allowed within v3.5.1 for WEMIS reporting as it does not indicate that there was an intent to collect this information by the provider.



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