

## Race/Ethnicity Coding – Possible Solutions

The race hierarchy changes as of 01/01/2007 dates of service (any 1Q 2007 record qualifying for submission) are intended to more accurately reflect national coding conventions and to expand the collection of race values as recommended by the Office of Management and Budget of the federal government.

The Wlpop race hierarchy prior to 01/01/2007 dates of service (1Q 2007 record submission qualifier):

<b>Code</b>	<b>Code Description</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Asian or Pacific Islander</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Black (deleted or African American)</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Not Asked</b>

The Wlpop race hierarchy after 01/01/2007 dates of service (1Q 2007 record submission qualifier)

<b>Code</b>	<b>Code Description</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Black or African American</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Not Asked</b>

The major problem with changing the race hierarchy and coding structure – the values 2, 4, 5, and 6 assigned prior to 01/01/2007 mean something different than they do under the new structure.

For example, a race value of '4' collected prior to 01/01/2007 signifies that the patient is white, however for 1Q submission, the record will need to be coded as '5' – signifying white. So what is the best way to handle the code crossover? There are many ways to handle this, however, each computer system within a hospital is different, so without knowing any further details about your computer system, here are some possible solutions:



Change all race coding within your system (if you can) to an 'alpha' designator from a numeric. If white (4 – prior to 01/01/2007, and 5 – as of 01/01/2007) were 'W' instead of a number, whether or not it was assigned before the 01/01/2007 date or as of that date, the race value stored within the computer system stays the same. For 4Q submissions, the 'W' would be coded to '4', for 1Q submissions, the 'W' would be coded to '5', etc.

If your computer systems does not allow race codes to be alpha characters, then perhaps the below scenario might work:

For the interim period of 01/01/2007 to after your facility's 4Q submission – assign a new code of '8' (although not a valid value for submission) to capture the new '4' code of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. After creating the 1Q submission files, and prior to submitting your 1Q submission, your IT department would have to change code 6 to code 7, code 5 to code 6, code 4 to code 5, and code 8 to code 4. Once your submissions have gone through for both 4Q (including OHO) and 1Q, then you should be able to effect the change in the table in your system.

Yet another solution could be implemented by programming the extract to assign the race codes and utilizing the second scenario outlined above – assign a completely different code in your system for the new code description of 'Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander'. Leaving the race codes as they are now in your facility is acceptable, however, the race values effective 01/01/2007 would need to be programmed for assignment during the submission file extraction process in order to encompass the changes.

This is a complex situation and one other item to evaluate is whether this change affects internal analysis and reporting of race information based on system data.

Another resource for a possible solution to the race coding changes is your software vendor. Perhaps they have dealt with this type of situation before and can offer a solution tailored to your needs through modification of your software's race table.