ICD-10 Coding Tips are brief, one-page, informative examples of ICD-10 conventions, guidelines, terminology and/or codes of the classification system. These tips are intended for Coding professionals, Coding auditors, educators and Coding Management staff.

**TIP #27: ICD-10-CM – External Causes of Morbidity**

### Chapter 20, External Causes of Morbidity

External cause codes capture the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause: How did the injury or health condition happen?</th>
<th>Intent: Was the event unintentional or accidental; or intentional, such as suicide or assault?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place: Where did the event occur?</td>
<td>Unintentional/accidental:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity: What was the patient doing at the time of the event?</td>
<td>All transport accident categories are assumed accidental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: What was the patient’s work status at the time of the event such as civilian or military?</td>
<td>Intentional:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Suicide: Intentional Self – Harm (categories X71 – X83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assault: Assault (categories X92 – Y09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undetermined: Event of undetermined intent (categories Y21 – Y33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not assign unless the documentation specifies that the intent cannot be determined.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Cause: How did the injury or health condition happen?
- The first code to be assigned designates the *specific cause of the injury/condition*.
- Assigned to each encounter for which the injury/condition is being treated, not just the initial encounter.
- Use as many external cause codes as appropriate to describe the injury/condition.
- ICD-10-CM provides some combination external cause codes to identify sequential events that result in an injury:
  - The injury may be due to either event or to both.
  - The codes assigned should correspond to the actual sequence of events regardless of which caused the most serious injury.
- A 7th character is used to identify the specific encounter. The 7th character on the external cause code, should match the 7th character on the injury/condition that it corresponds with:
  - **Initial**: 7th character is ‘A’
  - **Subsequent**: 7th character is ‘D’
  - **Sequela**: 7th character is ‘S’
- If the patient has multiple injuries/conditions that were caused by different events, assign an external cause code for each separate injury/condition as appropriate.
  - Sequence the external cause code most closely related to the principal diagnosis or the most serious injury before any other external cause codes.

#### Intent: Was the event unintentional or accidental; or intentional, such as suicide or assault?
- **Unintentional/accidental**: All transport accident categories are assumed accidental
- **Intentional**:
  - **Suicide**: Intentional Self – Harm (categories X71 – X83)
  - **Assault**: Assault (categories X92 – Y09)
- **Undetermined**: Event of undetermined intent (categories Y21 – Y33)
  - Do not assign unless the documentation specifies that the intent cannot be determined.

#### Place: Where did the event occur?
- Place of Occurrence, category Y92
- Code one time only at the initial encounter
- No 7th character

#### Activity: What was the patient doing at the time of the event?
- Activity, category Y93
- Code one time only at the initial encounter
- The activity codes are not applicable to poisonings, adverse effects, misadventures or sequela

#### Status: What was the patient’s work status at the time of the event?
- External cause status, category Y99
- Indicates the work status of the person at the time the event occurred, such as: Military or civilian, at work or not, a student or volunteer, etc.
- Code one time only at the initial encounter
- Not applicable to poisonings, adverse effects, misadventures or late effects.

#### Hierarchy for Sequencing External Cause of Morbidity Codes
- Child and adult abuse
- Terrorism
- Cataclysmic events
- Transport accidents
- Other injuries