

SW Behavioral, LLC	SECTION:		NO:	
	TITLE: Financial Assistance and Charity Care		DISTRIBUTION: Policy & Procedure Manual	
Original Date of Issue:			Date of Approval:	
Revised:				

POLICY:

SW Behavioral, LLC (the "Hospital") will provide healthcare services to all persons in need of medically necessary care regardless of ability to pay. The Hospital has established the following criteria for financial assistance and charity care (collectively "Charity Care"), consistent with Wash. Admin. Code Title 246, Ch. 453 (1994).

PROCEDURES:

- I. Communications to the public:

The Hospital's Charity Care policy shall be made publicly available through the following elements.

 - A. A notice advising patients that the Hospital provides Charity Care shall be posted in key areas, including admissions, reception and nursing units.
 - B. The Hospital will concurrently distribute a written notice indicating the policy to patients at the time that the Hospital requests information pertaining to third party coverage.
 1. The written information will also be verbally explained at this time.
 2. The patient must then sign the notice, indicating that he/she was duly informed of the availability of Charity Care.
 3. A copy of the signed notice will be placed in the patient's chart.
 4. If for some reason, for example in an emergency situation, the patient is not notified of the existence of Charity Care before receiving treatment; he/she will be notified in writing as soon as possible thereafter.

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- C. The Hospital shall train appropriate staff to answer charity care questions effectively or direct such inquiries to the appropriate department in a timely manner.
- D. Written information about the hospital's Charity Care Policy shall be made available to any person who requests the information, either by mail, by telephone or in person.
- E. The Hospital's sliding fee schedule, if applicable, shall also be made available upon request
- F. Admitting will provide the information of patient's eligibility for Charity Care to the patient's Discharge Planner.
 - 1. At the time discharge plans are known for patients eligible for charity care the patient's Discharge Planner will provide the packet for the patient
 - 2. If the decision for discharge is made on the day of discharge the Discharge Planner may give the packet for the patient to the patient's Nursing Contact Person.
 - 3. If the patient is discharged from court Admitting will mail a packet to the patient's known address.

II. Eligibility Criteria

- A. Charity care is generally secondary to all other financial resources available to the patient, including group or individual medical plans, worker's compensation, Medicare, Medicaid or medical assistance programs, other state, federal, or military programs, third party liability situations or any other situation in which another person or entity may have a legal responsibility to pay for the costs of services.

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- B. The medically indigent patient will be granted Charity Care regardless of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, or immigration status.
- C. In those situations where appropriate primary payment sources are not available, patients shall be considered for charity care under this hospital policy based on the following criteria, (the Hospital model of choice to meet the requirements of WAC 246-453-050 are the following):
1. The full amount of hospital charges will be determined to be Charity Care for a patient whose gross family income is at or below 100% of the current federal poverty level (consistent with WAC 256-435).
 2. The sliding fee schedule will be used to determine the amount that will be written off for patients with incomes between 101% and 200% of the current federal poverty level.
- D. Catastrophic Charity: The Hospital may write off as Charity Care amounts for patients with family income in excess of 200% of the federal poverty level when circumstances indicate severe financial hardship or personal loss.
- E. The responsible party's financial obligation, which remains after the application of any sliding fee schedule shall be payable in monthly installments over a reasonable period of time, without interest or late fees, as negotiated between the hospital and the responsible party. The responsible party's account shall not be turned over to a collection agency unless payments are missed or there is some period of inactivity on the account, and there is no satisfactory contact with the patient.
- F. The Hospital shall not require a disclosure of resources from charity care applicants whose income is less than 100% of the current Federal Poverty Level but may require a disclosure of resources from Charity

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Care applicants whose income is at or above 101% of the current Federal Poverty Level.

III. Process for Eligibility Determination

A. Initial Determination:

1. The Hospital shall use an application process for determining eligibility for charity care. Requests to provide charity care will be accepted from sources such as physicians, community or religious groups, social services, financial services personnel, and the patient.
2. During the patient registration process, or at any time prior to the final payment of the bill and after the patient has been notified of the existence and availability of charity care, the Hospital will make an initial determination of eligibility based on verbal or written application for Charity Care.
3. Pending final eligibility determination, the Hospital will not initiate collection efforts or request deposits, provided that the responsible party is cooperative with the Hospital's efforts to reach a final determination of sponsorship status.
4. If the Hospital becomes aware of factors which might qualify the patient for Charity Care under this policy, it will advise the patient of this potential and make an initial determination that such account is to be treated as Charity Care.

B. Final Determination:

1. Prima Facie Write-Offs: In the event that the responsible party's identification as an indigent person is obvious to hospital personnel, and the Hospital can establish that the applicant's income is clearly within the range of eligibility, the Hospital will grant Charity Care

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based solely on this initial determination. In these cases, the Hospital is not required to complete full verification or documentation, in accordance with WAC 246-453-030(3).

2. Charity care forms, instructions, and written applications shall be furnished to patients when Charity Care is requested, when need is indicated, or when financial screening indicates potential need.
3. All applications whether initiated by the patient or the Hospital, should be accompanied by documentation to verify income amounts indicated on the application form. Any one of the following documents shall be considered sufficient evidence upon which to base the final determination of Charity Care eligibility:
 - a. A "W-2" withholding statement;
 - b. Pay stubs from all employment during the relevant time period;
 - c. An income tax return from the most recently filed calendar year;
 - d. Forms approving or denying eligibility for Medicaid and/or state-funded medical assistance;
 - e. Forms approving or denying unemployment compensation; or
 - f. Written statements from employers or DSHS employees.
4. During the initial request period, the patient and the Hospital may pursue other sources of funding, including Medical Assistance and Medicare. The Hospital may not require that a patient applying for a determination of indigent status seek bank or other loan source funding.
5. Usually, the relevant time period for which documentation will be requested will be a month prior to the admit date. However, if such documentation does not accurately reflect the applicant's current financial situation, documentation will only be requested for the period of time after the patient's financial situation changed.

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6. In the event that the responsible party is not able to provide any of the documentation described above, the Hospital shall rely on written and signed statements from the responsible party for making a final determination of eligibility for classification as an indigent person. (WAC 246-453-030(4)).
- C. The Hospital will allow a patient to apply for Charity Care at any point from pre-admission to final payment of the bill, recognizing that a patient's ability to pay over an extended period may be substantially altered due to illness or financial hardship, resulting in a need for charity services. If the change in financial status is temporary, the Hospital may choose to suspend payments temporarily rather than initiate Charity Care.
- D. Time frame for final determination and appeals.
1. Each charity care applicant who has been initially determined eligible for Charity Care shall be provided with at least thirty (30) calendar days, or such time as may reasonably be necessary, to secure and present documentation in support of his or her charity care application prior to receiving a final determination of sponsorship status.
 2. The Hospital shall notify the applicant of its final determination within fourteen (14) days of receipt of all application and documentation material.
 3. The patient/guarantor may appeal the determination of eligibility for Charity Care by providing additional verification of income or family size to the Patient Accounts Manager within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification.
 4. The timing of reaching a final determination of Charity Care status shall have no bearing on the identification of charity care deductions from revenue as distinct from bad debts, in accordance with WAC 246-453-020(10).

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E. If the patient has paid some or the entire bill for medical services and is later found to have been eligible for Charity Care at the time services were provided, he/she shall be reimbursed within thirty (30) days of receiving the Charity Care designation.

F. Adequate notice of denial:

1. When a patient's application for Charity Care is denied, the patient shall receive a written notice of denial which includes:

- a. The reason or reasons for the denial and the rules to support the Hospital's decision;
- b. The date of the decision; and
- c. Instructions for appeal or reconsideration.

2. When the applicant does not provide requested information and there is not enough information available for the Hospital to determine eligibility, the denial notice also includes:

- a. A description of the information that was requested and not provided, including the date the information was requested;
- b. A statement that eligibility for Charity Care cannot be established based on information available to the Hospital; and
- c. That eligibility will be determined if, within thirty (30) days from the date of the denial notice, the applicant provides all specified information previously requested but not provided.

3. The Director of Finance and/or Patient Accounts Manager will review all appeals. If this review affirms the previous denial of Charity Care, written notification will be sent to the patient/guarantor and the Department of Health in accordance with state law.

IV. Documentation and Records

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- A Confidentiality: All information relating to the application will be kept confidential. Copies of documents that support the application will be kept with the application form.
- B. Documents pertaining to Charity Care shall be retained for five (5) years.