

Contra Costa Health Services

Compliance	Charity Care Program	Policy # 708-C
		Original Date: 01/2007
		Revised: 01/2015
		Supercedes:

PURPOSE

This policy defines the process for determining when qualified low income uninsured and underinsured patients of Contra Costa Health Services are eligible to receive fully discounted (free) medical care.

POLICY

Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) operates a number of programs and services to help qualifying individuals minimize the financial burden associated with the cost of obtaining medical treatment.

- The Financial Counseling Department helps eligible patients gain access to government sources of medical assistance including Medi-Cal, Family PACT, or other health coverage programs including health insurance through Covered California.
- The Basic Health Care Program is temporary health coverage program for low-income, uninsured United States citizens or legal permanent residents of Contra Costa County whose household financial resources and/or income does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The Sliding Fee Scale Program offers a discount for episodic care provided in the Emergency Department, admissions in Contra Costa Regional Medical Center or referrals to CCRMC for outpatient care. This program is offered to uninsured patients whose household income does not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Patients who are not eligible for any of these health coverage programs may financially qualify for fully discounted medical care under the Charity Care Program. This policy outlines the process used by Contra Costa Health Services to determine a patient’s eligibility for the Charity Care Program.

REFERENCES

California Assembly Bill AB 774 – Hospital Fair Pricing Policies
 California Code of Civil Procedure, Section 685.010
 California Health and Safety Code, Sections 127400-127455
 California Constitution, Article XV, Section 1

DEFINITIONS

Uninsured patients are individuals who do not have third-party coverage from a health insurer, health care service plan, Medicare, Medi-Cal, Basic Health Care, or the Low Income Health Program, and

whose injury is not compensated under a Worker's Compensation plan, automobile insurance, or other insurance as determined and documented by Contra Costa Health Services. Patients who have reached a lifetime limit on their insurance benefits will be considered uninsured for services in excess of that limit.

Underinsured patients are patients who have third party insurance coverage, but are considered to have high medical costs because they have annual out-of-pocket medical expenses that exceed 10% of the patient's family income in the prior twelve months and their family income does not exceed 350% of the federal poverty level.

PROCEDURE

Uninsured or underinsured individuals who do not qualify for government sponsored health benefits, Basic Health Care, or the Low Income Health Program may qualify for fully discounted medical care under the Charity Care Program. Eligibility for this program is based on family income limitations and high out-of-pocket medical expenses.

1. Determining Patient Eligibility

The Financial Counseling Department will determine an applicant's eligibility for the Charity Care Program based on a review of the patient's monetary assets and family income. Documentation of income is limited to recent pay stubs or income tax returns.

Uninsured patients are financially qualified to obtain fully discounted medical care when their family income is at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and their net assets do not exceed \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 per family. When determining eligibility, the first \$10,000 of a patient's assets and 50% of a patient's monetary assets above \$10,000 may not be considered.

Monetary assets are assets that are readily convertible to cash, such as bank accounts and publicly traded stock. Retirement plans, deferred compensation plans qualified under the Internal Revenue Code, and nonqualified deferred compensation may not be considered, nor can an individual's primary residence. However, individuals who own additional property will not be eligible for the Charity Care Program.

Underinsured patients are financially qualified to obtain fully discounted medical care if they do not receive a discounted rate on their medical bill as a result of third-party coverage, if their family income is at or below 150% of the federal poverty level, if their net assets do not exceed \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 per family, and if they have out-of-pocket medical expenses in the prior 12

months (whether or not at Contra Costa Health Services) that exceeds 10% of the family's income. Underinsured individuals may be asked to provide documentation for expenses incurred outside of Contra Costa Health Services in the prior twelve months.

Patients must apply for Charity Care eligibility within 150 days of initial billing. Eligibility for fully discounted medical care will be denied if the applicant does not financially qualify, or does not provide the required documentation within 150 days of the initial billing. If the patient makes a reasonable effort to obtain documentation, but is unable to do so through no fault of his/her own, an attempt will be made to make an eligibility determination without such documentation.

Requests initiated beyond 150 days of initial billing will be denied.

Applicants will be allowed to appeal any denial of eligibility to the Director of Patient Financial Services.

Information concerning income or assets obtained as part of the eligibility process will be maintained in a separate file from the file used to collect the debt. This information will not be used for collection activities.

2. Limitations on Patient Liability

Once Contra Costa Health Services accepts a patient, all services furnished to that patient during a particular hospital stay or outpatient visit are subject to the fully discounted medical care policy. This includes emergency services provided by an emergency physician and medically unnecessary services or procedures.

Patients must apply for Charity Care eligibility within 150 days of initial billing. Requests initiated beyond 150 days of the initial billing will not be considered, and the patient will be fully liable for all charges associated with the services rendered.

- Ineligible uninsured patients will be billed for the cost of all medical care received from Contra Costa Health Services.
- Ineligible underinsured patients will be billed for any unpaid balance after their third party insurance payment has been received.

Eligibility for fully discounted medical care will be denied if the applicant does not financially qualify or does not make a

reasonable effort to provide the required documentation within 150 days of the initial billing.

Applicants will be allowed to appeal any denial of eligibility to the Director of Patient Financial Services.

3. Providing Notices

A. Written Notice to Patients: The initial billing to a patient classified as uninsured or underinsured will be accompanied by:

- a. A statement of charges.
- b. A request that the patient inform the Patient Accounting Department if he/she has health insurance coverage or other coverage.
- c. A statement that the individual may be eligible for Medicare, Healthy Families, Medi-Cal, Family PACT, Basic Health Care, or the Low Income Health Program.
- d. Information advising the patient that he/she may qualify for fully discounted medical care or a partial discount on their medical bill based on family income limitations and high out-of-pocket medical expenses.
- e. Information advising the patient on where to call to obtain assistance in applying for these programs.

Patients are classified as uninsured if they do not have third-party coverage or have not provided evidence of third-party coverage at the time of service. A patient with third-party coverage will be considered underinsured for billing purposes after the insurance has paid or been denied and the balance becomes the responsibility of the patient.

B. Posted Notices: Information about the availability of financial assistance for financially qualified patients of Contra Costa Health Services will be posted in locations visible to the public including, but not limited to:

- a. The Contra Costa Regional Medical Center Emergency Department;
- b. The Patient Financial Services Office;
- c. The Contra Costa Regional Medical Center Admissions Office;

- d. Outpatient settings including the Health Centers and ancillary departments furnishing services to outpatients.

4. Limits on Debt Collection

Neither Contra Costa Health Services, the assignee of an account, nor a collection agency may, within 150 days of initial billing, report adverse information to a consumer credit reporting agency concerning, or commence a civil action against, a patient who lacks coverage or provides information that he or she may be a patient with high medical costs.

Unpaid bills will not be sent to a collection agency while the patient is attempting to qualify for eligibility in the Charity Care Program.

Qualifying uninsured patients will not be billed for the cost of any medical care received from Contra Costa Health Services.

Qualifying underinsured patients will not be billed for any unpaid balance after their third party insurance payment is received.

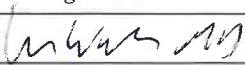
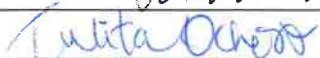
CCHS will provide written notice to the patient before beginning collection activity. The assignee of the debt, such as a collection agency, must also provide written notice before it begins collection activity. The notice must include information about debt collection activities including the patient’s rights, and a statement about the availability of nonprofit credit counseling services in the area.

Income or asset information obtained during the eligibility process may not be used for collection activities.

5. Reimbursing Overcharges to Patients

Any amount collected from a qualified patient in excess of the amount due under the terms of the Charity Care Policy will be refunded with interest at the rate provided in Section 685.010 of the California Code of Civil Procedure, currently set at 10 percent annually.

RESPONSIBLE Health Services Administrator-Financial Counseling
Director of Patient Accounting

Departmental Review	Signature	Date
Health Services Director		3-11-2015
Compliance Officer		3/11/2015