

The Village Family Service Center Sliding Fee Discount Program Policy

SUBJECT: Sliding Fee Discount Program

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 10, 2015

POLICY: To Make Available Discount Services to Those in Need

PURPOSE:

This program is designed to provide free or discounted care to those who have no means, or limited means, to pay for their medical services (Uninsured or Underinsured). In addition to quality healthcare, clients are entitled to financial counseling by someone who can understand and offer possible solutions for those who cannot pay in full. The Client Account Representative's role is that of client advocate, that is, one who works with the client and/or guarantor to find reasonable payment alternatives.

The Village Family Service Center will offer a Sliding Fee Discount Program to all who are unable to pay for their services. The Village Family Service Center will base program eligibility on a person's ability to pay and will not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, creed, disability or national origin. The Federal Poverty Guidelines, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>, are used in creating and annually updating the sliding fee schedule (SFS) to determine eligibility.

PROCEDURE: The following guidelines are to be followed in providing the Sliding Fee Discount Program.

1. **Notification:** The Village Family Service Center will notify clients of the Sliding Fee Discount Program by:
 - Payment Policy will be available to all clients at the time of service.
 - Notification of the Sliding Fee Discount Program will be offered to each client upon admission.
 - An explanation of our Sliding Fee Discount Program and our application form are available on The Village Family Service Center website.
 - The Village Family Service Center places notification of the Sliding Fee Discount Program in all Intake Offices.

2. All clients seeking healthcare services at The Village Family Service Center are assured that they will be served regardless of ability to pay. **No one is refused service because of lack of financial means to pay.**

3. **Request for discount:** Requests for discounted services may be made by clients, family members, social services staff or others who are aware of existing financial hardship. The Sliding Fee Discount Program will only be made available for in office visits. Information and forms can be obtained from the Front Desk.
4. **Administration:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program procedure will be administered through the Business Office Manager or his/her designee. Information about the Sliding Fee Discount Program policy and procedure will be provided and assistance offered for completion of the application. Dignity and confidentiality will be respected for all who seek and/or are provided charitable services.
5. **Alternative payment sources:** All alternative payment resources must be exhausted, including all third-party payment from insurance(s), Federal and State programs.
6. **Completion of Application:** The client/responsible party must complete the Sliding Fee Discount Program application in its entirety. By signing the Sliding Fee Discount Program application, persons authorize The Village Family Service Center access in confirming income as disclosed on the application form. Providing false information on a Sliding Fee Discount Program application will result in all Sliding Fee Discount Program discounts being revoked and the full balance of the account(s) restored and payable immediately.

If an application is unable to be processed due to the need for additional information, the applicant has two weeks from the date of notification to supply the necessary information without having the date on their application adjusted. If a client does not provide the requested information within that two week time period, their application will be re-dated to the date on which they supply the requested information. Any accounts turned over for collection as a result of the client's delay in providing information will not be considered for the Sliding Fee Discount Program.

7. **Eligibility:** Discounts will be based on income and family size only. The Village Family Service Center uses the Census Bureau definitions of each:
 - a. **Family** is defined as: a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family.
 - b. **Income** includes: earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates, trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, assistance from outside the household, and other miscellaneous sources. *Noncash benefits (such as food stamps and housing subsidies) do not count.*

8. **Income verification:** Applicants must provide one of the following: prior year W-2, three most recent pay stubs, most recent tax return, letter from employer, or Form 4506-T (if W-2 not filed). Self-employed individuals will be required to submit detail of the most recent three months of income and expenses for the business. Adequate information must be made available to determine eligibility for the program. **Self-declaration of Income** may only be used in special circumstances. Specific examples include participants who are homeless. Clients who are able to provide written verification must provide a signed statement of income, and why she/he is unable to provide independent verification. This statement will be presented to The Village Family Service Center's Regional Supervisor or his/her designee for review and final determination as to the sliding fee percentage. Self-declared clients will be responsible for 100% of their charges until management determines the appropriate category.
9. **Discounts:** Those with incomes at or below 100% of poverty will receive a full 100% discount. Those with incomes above 100% of poverty, but at or below 200% of poverty, will be charged accordingly. The sliding fee schedule will be updated during the first quarter of every calendar year with the latest federal poverty guidelines, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>.
10. **Waiving of Charges:** Waiving of charges may only be used in special circumstances and must be approved by The Village Family Service Center's Regional Supervisor or their designee. Any waiving of charges should be documented in the client's file along with an explanation (e.g., ability to pay, good will, health promotion event).
11. **Applicant notification:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program determination will be provided to the applicant(s) in writing, and will include the percentage of Sliding Fee Discount Program write off, or, if applicable, the reason for denial. If the application is approved for less than a 100% discount or denied, the client and/or responsible party must immediately establish payment arrangements with The Village Family Service Center. Sliding Fee Discount Program applications cover any balances incurred within 12 months after the approved date, unless their financial situation changes significantly. The applicant has the option to reapply after the 12 months have expired or anytime there has been a significant change in the family income.
12. **Refusal to Pay:** If a client verbally expresses an unwillingness to pay or vacates the premises without paying for services, the client will be contacted in writing regarding their payment obligations. If the client does not make an effort to pay or fails to respond within 60 days, this constitutes refusal to pay. At this point in time, The Village Family Service Center can explore other options not limited, but including offering the client a payment plan, waiving of charges, or referring the client to collections efforts.
13. **Record Keeping:** Information related to the Sliding Fee Discount Program decisions will be maintained and preserved in a password protected, confidential client file located on The Village Family Service Center's electronic billing software system in an effort to preserve the dignity of those receiving free or discounted care.

14. **Policy and Procedure review:** Annually, the amount of Sliding Fee Discount Program dollars provided will be reviewed by the Business Office. The SFS will be updated based on the current Federal Poverty Guidelines. Pertinent information comparing amount budgeted and actual community care provided shall serve as a guideline for future planning. This will also service as a discussion base for reviewing possible changes in our policy and procedures and for examining institutional practices which may serve as barriers preventing eligible clients from having access to our community care provisions.
15. If a client is unable to pay their sliding fee rate, reduced fee sessions may be available to them. Clients may apply by using the “Counseling Services Request for Reduced Fee” form which can be found in the Counseling Manual.
16. See “Determining and Setting up Self Pay Clients in Procentive for additional details.