

	Debt Collection Policy (Policy) - Patient Financial Services Department	Patient Financial Services
Origination Date: 07/01/2010	Approval Date: 10/30/2025	Version # 5

PURPOSE: San Bernardino Mountains Community Hospital District (SBMCHD) provides high quality care to patients when they are in need of hospital services. All patients or their guarantor have a financial responsibility related to services received at SBMCHD and must make arrangements for payment to SBMCHD either before or after services are rendered. Such arrangements may include payment by an insurance plan, including coverage programs offered through the federal and state government. Payment arrangements may also be made directly with the patient, subject to the payment terms and conditions of SBMCHD.

Emergency patients will always receive all medically necessary care within the scope resources available at SBMCHD, to assure that their medical condition is stabilized prior to consideration of any financial arrangements.

The Debt Collection Policy establishes the guidelines, policies and procedures for use by hospital personnel in evaluating and determining patient payment arrangements. This policy is intended to establish fair and effective means for collection of patient accounts owed to the hospital. In addition, other SBMCHD policies such as the Charity Care and Discount Payment Policy will be considered by SBMCHD personnel when establishing payment arrangements for each specific patient or their guarantor.

SCOPE: The Debt Collection Policy will apply to all patients who receive services at SBMCHD. This policy defines the requirements and processes used by the hospital Patient Financial Services department when making payment arrangements with individual patients or their account guarantors. This policy also specifies the standards and practices used for the collection of debts arising from the provision of services to patients at SBMCHD. This policy acknowledges that some patients may have special payment arrangements as defined by an insurance contract to which SBMCHD is a party, or in accordance with hospital conditions of participation in state and federal programs. SBMCHD endeavors to treat every patient or their guarantor with fair consideration

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and respect when making payment arrangements.

All requests for payment arrangements shall be addressed in accordance with this policy.

POLICY: All patients who receive care at SBMCHD must make arrangements for payment of any or all amounts owed for hospital services rendered in good faith by SBMCHD. SBMCHD reserves the right and retains sole authority for establishing the terms and conditions of payment by individual patients and/or their guarantor, subject to requirements established under state and federal law or regulation.

GENERAL PRACTICES:

1. SBMCHD and the patient share responsibility for timely and accurate resolution of all patient accounts. Patient cooperation and communication is essential to this process. SBMCHD will make reasonable, cost-effective efforts to assist patients with fulfillment of their financial responsibility.

2. Hospital care at SBMCHD is available to all those who may be in need of necessary services. To facilitate financial arrangements for persons who may be of low or moderate income, both those who are uninsured or underinsured, SBMCHD provides the following special assistance to patients as part of the routine billing process:
 - a. For uninsured patients, a written statement of full itemized charges for services rendered by the hospital is provided to the patient.
 - b. Upon request, patients who have third party insurance will be provided a revenue code summary statement which identifies the charges related to hospital services. Insured patients will receive a balance due from patient statement once the hospital has received payment from the insurance payer. Upon patient request, a complete itemized statement of charges will be provided;
 - c. A written request that the patient inform SBMCHD if the patient has any health insurance coverage, Medicare, Medi-Cal, Covered California, or other form of insurance coverage;
 - d. A written statement informing the patient or guarantor that they may be

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- eligible for Medicare, Medi-Cal, Covered California, California Children’s Services Program, or the SBMCHD Charity Care and Discount Payment Program;
- e. A written statement indicating how the patient may obtain an application for the Medi-Cal Program, Covered California, or other appropriate government coverage program;
 - f. If a patient is uninsured, an application to the Medi-Cal-Program, Covered California, or other appropriate government assistance program will be provided prior to discharge from the hospital;
 - g. A SBMCHD representative is available at no cost to the patient to assist with application to relevant government assistance programs;
 - h. A written statement regarding eligibility criteria and qualification procedures for charity care (free care) and discount payment (any charge for care this is reduced but not for free) under the SBMCHD Charity Care and Discount Payment Program. This statement shall include the title and telephone number of hospital personnel who can assist the patient or guarantor with information about and an application for Charity Care or Discount Payment.
 - i. Uninsured patients will also be provided contact information for local consumer legal assistance programs which may assist the uninsured patient with obtaining coverage.
3. The SBMCHD Patient Financial Services department is primarily responsible for the timely and accurate collection of all patient accounts. Patient Financial Services personnel work cooperatively with other hospital departments, members of the Medical Staff, patients, insurance companies, collection agencies and others to assure that timely and accurate processing of patient accounts can occur.
 4. Accurate information provides the basis for SBMCHD to correctly bill patients or their insurer. Patient billing information should be obtained in advance of hospital services whenever possible so that verification, prior authorization or other approvals may be completed prior to the provision of services. When information cannot be obtained prior to the time of service, hospital personnel will work with each patient or their guarantor to assure that all necessary billing

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information is received by SBMCHD prior to the completion of services.

PROCEDURES:

1. Each patient account will be assigned to an appropriate Patient Financial Services representative based upon the type of payer and current individual staff workloads. The PFS Manager will periodically review staff workloads and may change or adjust the process or specific assignment of patient accounts to assure timely, accurate and cost-effective collection of such accounts.
2. Account details will be reviewed to assure accuracy and completeness of information necessary for the account to be billed.
3. If the account is payable by the patient's insurer, the initial bill will be forwarded directly to the designated insurer. SBMCHD Patient Financial Services personnel will work with the patient's insurer to obtain any or all amounts owed on the account by the insurer. This will include calculation of contracted rates or other special arrangements that may apply. Once payment by the insurer has been determined by SBMCHD, any residual patient liability balance, for example a patient co-payment or deductible amount, will be billed directly to the patient. Any or all patient balances are due and payable within 30 days from the date of this first patient billing.
4. If the account is payable only by the patient, it will be classified as a private pay account. Private pay accounts may potentially qualify for a prompt payment discount, government coverage programs, or financial aid under the SBMCHD Charity Care and Discount Payment Policy. Patients with accounts in private pay status should contact a Patient Financial Services representative to obtain assistance with qualifying for one or more of these options.
5. In the event that a patient or patient's guarantor has made a deposit payment, or other partial payment for services and subsequently is determined to qualify for charity care or discount payment, all amounts paid which exceed the payment obligation, if any, as determined through the Charity Care and Discount Payment Policy process, shall be refunded to the patient with interest.

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Any overpayment due to the patient under this obligation may not be applied to other open balance accounts or debt owed to the hospital by the patient or family representative, without written authorization from the patient or family representative. Any or all amounts owed shall be reimbursed to the patient or family representative within a reasonable time period. Interest shall begin to accrue on the first day that payment by the patient is received by the hospital. Interest amounts shall be accrued at Ten Percent (10%) per annum. In the event that the amount of interest owed to the patient as part of a refund is less than Five Dollars (\$5.00), no interest amount will be paid to the patient. However, in cases where the interest amount due is less than Five Dollars (\$5.00), SBMCHD shall issue a credit to the patient for the amount due for at least 60 days from the date the amount is due.

6. The Hospital offers patients/responsible parties an extended payment plan option when they are not able to settle the account in one lump sum payment. Extended payment plans are established on a case-by-case basis through consideration of the total amount owed by the patient/responsible party to the Hospital and the patient's/responsible party's financial circumstances. Extended payment plans generally require a minimum monthly payment of an amount such that the term of the payment plan shall not exceed twelve (12) months. Once an extended payment plan has been agreed to by the patient/guarantor, failure to make all consecutive payments due during any 60-day period will constitute a payment plan default. Written notice of extended payment plan default will be provided to the patient/guarantor. It is the patient/responsible party's responsibility to contact the Hospital Patient Business Office if circumstances change and payment plan terms cannot be met. Failure to do so may result in the account being forwarded to collection status.

7. Patients/responsible parties who have qualified for Discount Payment are eligible for a Qualified Payment Plan as described in the Mountains Community Hospital Charity Care and Discount Payment Policy. Qualified payment plans involve negotiation between the hospital and patient/responsible party and may result in a payment plan term which exceeds twelve (12) months. Qualified payment plans may be arranged by contacting a hospital Patient Financial Services representative. Qualified payment plans are free of any interest charges. If a

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patient misses a payment under a Qualified Payment Plan, the Hospital shall send a notice 60 calendar days after the first missed payment giving the patient 30 calendar days to make a payment before the extended payment plan becomes inoperative and subject to collection.

8. Patient account balances in private pay status will be considered past due after 30 days from the date of initial billing. Accounts may be sent to collection according to the following schedule:
 - a. Any or all private pay account balances where it is determined by MCHD that the patient or guarantor provided fraudulent, misleading or purposely inaccurate demographic or billing information, and/or when the patient or guarantor refuses to cooperate or communicate with PFS representatives, may be considered as eligible for collection immediately upon such a determination by MCHD. Any such account will be reviewed and approved for advancement by the PFS Manager or her/his designee;
 - b. Any or all account balances may be sent to collections where no payment has been received, and the patient has not made arrangement for payment with MCHD within 180 days of initial billing and the following actions have been taken by MCHD PFS representatives:
 - 1) a minimum of one bill showing itemized details, and
 - 2) three additional cycle statements have been sent to the patient or guarantor and
 - 3) two telephone calls have been placed to the patient or guarantor, and
 - 4) a Charity Care and Discount Payment application have been sent to the patient or guarantor, and
 - 5) final notices (OB/PD & AB w/Charity Care and Discount Payment application) have been sent to the patient or guarantor, and
 - 6) such accounts will be reviewed and approved for collection by the PFS, Manager or her/his designee;

9. Patient accounts will not be forwarded to collection status when the patient or guarantor makes reasonable efforts to communicate with SBMCHD Patient Financial Services representatives and makes good faith efforts to resolve the outstanding account. The SBMCHD PFS Manager or her/his designee will

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determine if the patient or guarantor are continuing to make good faith efforts to resolve the patient account and may use indicators such as: application for Medi-Cal, Covered California, or other government programs; application for the SBMCHD Charity Care and Discount Payment Program; regular partial payments of a reasonable amount; negotiation of a payment plan with SBMCHD and other such indicators that demonstrate the patient's effort to fulfill their payment obligation.

10. After 30 days or anytime when an account otherwise becomes past due and subject to internal or external collection, SBMCHD will provide every patient with written notice in the following form:
 - a. "State and federal law require debt collectors to treat you fairly and prohibit debt collectors from making false statements or threats of violence, using obscene or profane language, and making improper communications with third parties, including your employer. Except under unusual circumstances, debt collectors may not contact you before 8:00 a.m. or after 9:00 p.m. In general, a debt collector may not give information about your debt to another person, other than your attorney or spouse. A debt collector may contact another person to confirm your location or to enforce a judgment. For more information about debt collection activities, you may contact the Federal Trade Commission by telephone at 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357) or online at www.ftc.gov."
 - b. Non-profit credit counseling services may be available in the area. Please contact the SBMCHD Patient Financial Services if you need more information or assistance in contacting a credit counseling service.

11. For all patient accounts where there is no 3rd party insurer *and/or* whenever a patient provides information that he or she may have high medical costs, the Patient Financial Services representative will assure that the patient has been provided all elements of information as listed above in number 2, parts (a) through (i). This will be accomplished by sending a written billing supplement with the first patient bill. The Patient Financial Services representative will document that the billing supplement was sent by placing an affirmative statement in the "notes" section of the patient's account.

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12. SBMCHD will only utilize external collection agencies with which it has established written contractual agreements. Every collection agency performing services on behalf of SBMCHD must agree to comply with the terms and conditions of such contracts as specified by SBMCHD. All collection agencies contracted to provide services for or on behalf of SBMCHD shall agree to comply with the standards and practices defined in the collection agency agreement; including this Debt Collection Policy, the SBMCHD Charity Care and Discount Payment Policy and all legal requirements including those specified in the California Health & Safety Code Section.

13. SBMCHD, its collection agencies, or any assignee may use any or all legal means to pursue reimbursement, debt collection and any enforcement remedy from third-party liability settlements, tortfeasors, or other legally responsible parties. Such actions shall be conducted only with the prior written approval of the SBMCHD PFS Manager.

REVISION DATES PRIOR TO POLICY TECH: 3/11, 1/1/2015