CHONC Financial Assistance Policy

Proposed policy for review; not approved or adopted. Approval date: _____. Effective date: _____.

Policy

Children's Healthcare Organization of Northern California (CHONC) strives to improve the health and well-being of the children in the community we serve regardless of their ability to pay. All patients/guarantors, regardless of their insurance or level of income, will be treated fairly and with respect during and after their stay at CHONC.

This policy addresses CHONC's commitment to assist all patients without regard to ability to pay. Patients who are uninsured OR have high medical costs and whose family income is at or below 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible to apply for discount payment. Charity care is available under the separate 200% FPL criteria below.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to address the criteria and application process for charity care or financial assistance for patients who are uninsured or underinsured and are cared for at CHONC.

Definitions

Patient's Family includes the patient. For a patient age 18 or older who is not a dependent child age 18–20, it also includes the patient's spouse or domestic partner and dependent children under age 21, or of any age if disabled, whether living at home or not. For a patient under age 18, or a dependent child age 18–20, it includes the patient's parent or caretaker relatives and their other dependent children under age 21, or of any age if disabled. Family size and family income are determined using this definition.

High medical costs means either of the following: (a) annual out-of-pocket costs incurred by the patient at CHONC that exceed the lesser of 10% of the patient's current family income or 10% of the patient's family income in the prior 12 months; or (b) annual out-of-pocket medical expenses that exceed 10% of the patient's family income, if the patient provides documentation of medical expenses paid by the patient or Patient's Family in the prior 12 months. Expenses under the second pathway are not limited to CHONC. Either pathway

may establish high medical costs for charity care and discount payment under this policy.

Notification

Charity Care and Discount Payment information will be provided by public notice as follows:

Patient Bills: Bills mailed directly to the patient will include a notice explaining the availability of financial assistance to patients who are uninsured or have high medical costs based on a determination of eligibility in accordance with this policy. A contact and phone number for patients/guarantors to call to obtain more information about financial assistance will be included.

Posted Notices: Notices will be posted in the Administration and admitting areas indicating how to obtain information about financial assistance.

Distributed Notices at time of registration: Notices will also be distributed in the Administration and admitting areas indicating how to obtain information about financial assistance. All such notification shall be provided in English and Spanish and will be translated for patients/guarantors who speak other languages.

Exclusions

CHONC's charity care and discount payment policy does not apply to physician or professional charges that are not billed by the hospital.

Procedure and patient protections

CHONC limits eligible patients' obligation to not more than the applicable Medi-Cal rates in effect at the date of service. All patient information is kept confidential, and the handling of personal health information is protected in accordance with federal and state privacy laws.

Our collection policy prohibits pursuing legal action for non-payment of bills against any patient/guarantor who is unemployed and/or without other significant income. Nor do we charge interest in installment payment plans.

An extended, interest-free payment plan is available. CHONC and the patient shall negotiate its terms, taking into consideration family income and essential living expenses. If they cannot agree, CHONC will establish a reasonable payment plan with monthly payments no greater than 10% of monthly family income after deducting essential living expenses.

Patients/guarantors are expected to cooperate with CHONC’s financial assistance procedures and to contribute to the cost of their care based on their ability to pay.

Charity care eligibility