Subject: DEBT COLLECTION

Reference:
Hospital Fair Pricing Act: California Health and Safety Code § 127400-127446 et seq., Title 22 California Code of Regulations § 96051-96051.37, Assembly Bill 1020, Assembly Bill 2297 and Senate Bill 1061

FORM(S) REFERENCE:
POLICY REFERENCE NUMBER: 02-01-85 Free Care

PURPOSE:

San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (SDCPH) does not bill patients for inpatient or outpatient services, nor does it collect debts from patients. The intent of this policy is to ensure regulatory compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

POLICY:

SDCPH provides Free Care to all patients. In accordance with the *Hospital Fair Pricing Act* (California Health & Safety Code § 127400-127446) and other applicable regulations, SDCPH maintains this policy as a compliance framework. However, SDCPH does not bill or collect payments or debts from patients, making this policy inactive unless future changes occur.

DEFINITIONS:

Definitions are included only to align with regulatory compliance. Definitions not used in the administration of SDCPH's Debt Collection policy have been omitted.

A. Medically Necessary Care: A service is "medically necessary" or a "medical necessity" when it is performed in the hospital for the purposes of preventing, diagnosing, treating, or alleviating severe pain, illness, injury, or disability, in accordance with accepted medical standards.

B. Essential Living Expenses: Expenses necessary for daily living, including rent, food, utilities, transportation, medical payments, and other required expenditures.

C. Extraordinary Collection Actions (ECAs): Actions taken by a hospital or collection agency to obtain payment for medical care that include, but are not limited to, selling a patient's debt, reporting to credit agencies, placing liens on property, wage garnishments or initiating legal action. SDCPH does not engage in any ECAs.

PROCEDURE(S):

A. SDCPH does not issue bills to patients or hold them financially responsible for any services provided.

B. Patient accounts are not assigned to collection agencies.
No Extraordinary Collection Actions (ECAs) such as wage garnishments, liens or lawsuits are pursued.

C. SDCPH does not require financial eligibility determinations for Free Care.

D. SDCPH does not maintain or publish a list of shoppable services because those services are not provided. SDCPH does not provide elective or outpatient services that meet the criteria for "shoppable services," as defined by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI).

E. All behavioral health services provided at SDCPH are medically necessary, urgent or deemed as emergency psychiatric care. These services cannot be scheduled by patients in advance as "shoppable," and they are not offered on a discretionary or elective basis.

F. If billing is introduced in the future, this policy will be revised to include billing procedures, financial assistance, eligibility requirements and payment plan options.