

# CHARITY CARE FOR INDIGENT PATIENTS

Policy and Procedure No. 30-04 S • Revised Date: June 1, 2016

- I. **PURPOSE:** This policy serves to establish and ensure a fair and consistent method for the review and completion of requests for charitable medical care to our patients in need.
- II. **SCOPE:** All Deaconess Health System, Inc., entities listed below shall use this policy when approving charity care.
  - A. Deaconess Hospital, Inc., including Deaconess Gateway Hospital and Deaconess Cross Pointe.
  - B. The Heart Hospital at Deaconess Gateway, LLC
  - C. Deaconess Clinic, Inc.
- III. **POLICY:** Deaconess Health System, Inc., is committed to providing charity care to persons who have health care needs and are uninsured, underinsured, ineligible for a government program, or otherwise unable to pay, for medically necessary care based on their individual financial situation. Consistent with its mission to deliver compassionate, high quality, affordable health care services and to be advocates for those who are poor and disenfranchised, Deaconess Health System, Inc., strives to ensure that the financial capacity of people who need health care services does not prevent them from seeking or receiving care. Deaconess Health System, Inc., will provide, without discrimination, care for emergency medical conditions to individuals regardless of their eligibility for financial assistance or for government assistance.

Charity is not considered to be a substitute for personal responsibility. Patients are expected to cooperate with Deaconess Health System, Inc.'s. procedures for obtaining charity or other forms of payment or financial assistance, and to contribute to the cost of their care based on their individual ability to pay. Individuals with the financial capacity to purchase health insurance shall be encouraged to do so, as a means of assuring access to health care services, for their overall personal health, and for the protection of their individual assets.
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:** For the purpose of this policy and the corresponding procedures, the following definitions apply:
  - A. **Charity Care:** Health care services that have been or will be provided but are never expected to result in cash inflows. Charity care results from a provider's policy to provide health care services free or at a discount to individuals who meet the established criteria.
  - B. **Medically Indigent:** Any individual or family not classified as financially indigent who becomes so as a result of extensive medical conditions and/or expenses after payment of third-party payers where applicable, has no other tangible assets, and therefore is rendered unable to pay.
  - C. **Uninsured:** The patient has no level of insurance or third party assistance to assist with meeting his/her payment obligations.
  - D. **Underinsured:** The patient has some level of insurance or third-party assistance but still has out-of pocket expenses that exceed his/her financial abilities.
  - E. **Credit Score:** A number, roughly between 300 and 800 that reflects the credit history detailed by a person's credit report. Lenders calculate this number with the assistance of computer systems as part of the process of assigning rates and terms to loans. This score is assigned by one of the recognized credit reporting agencies.
  - F. **Collectability Score:** The number assigned to the probability of collecting \$50 or more within 12 months on patient balances. A high score indicates high probability of recovery.
- V. **RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES:**
  - A. For the purposes of this policy, "charity" or "financial assistance" refers to health care services provided by Deaconess Health System, Inc., without charge or at a discount to qualifying patients. The following health care services are eligible for charity:
    1. Emergency medical services provided in an emergency room setting.
    2. Services for a condition which, if not promptly treated, would lead to an adverse change in the health status of an individual.
    3. Non-elective services provided in response to life-threatening circumstances in a non-emergency room setting.
    4. Medically necessary services, evaluated on a case-by-case basis at Deaconess Health System, Inc., discretion.
  - B. Eligibility for charity will be considered for those individuals who are uninsured, underinsured, ineligible for a government health care benefit program, and who are unable to pay for their care, based upon a determination of financial need in accordance with this policy. The granting of charity shall be based on an individualized determination of financial need, and shall not take into account age, gender, race, social or immigrant status, sexual orientation or religious affiliation.
  - C. Financial need will be determined in accordance with procedures that involve an individual assessment of financial need; and may
    1. Include an application process, in which the patient or the patient's guarantor are required to cooperate and supply personal, financial and other information and documentation relevant to making a determination of financial need.
    2. Include the use of external publically available data sources that provide information on a patient's or a patient's guarantor's ability to pay (such as a credit scoring).
    3. Include reasonable efforts by Deaconess Health System, Inc. to explore appropriate alternative sources of payment and coverage from public and private payment programs and to assist patients to apply for such programs.
    4. Take into account the patient's available assets and all other financial resources available to the patient.
    5. Include a review of the patient's outstanding accounts receivable for prior services rendered and the patient's payment history.
  - D. The determination for assistance may be done at any point in the collection cycle. The need for financial assistance shall be re-evaluated at each subsequent time of services if the last financial evaluation was completed more than eight months prior, or at any time additional information relevant to the eligibility of the patient for charity becomes known.
  - E. In the event there is no evidence to support a patient's eligibility for charity care, Deaconess Health System, Inc., could use outside agencies in determining collectability scoring for the basis of determining charity care eligibility. Presumptive eligibility may also be determined on the basis of individual life circumstances that may include:
    1. Homeless or received care from a homeless clinic
    2. Food stamp eligibility
    3. Patient is deceased with no known estate
  - F. Services eligible under this policy will be made available to the patient on a sliding fee scale, in accordance with financial need, as determined in reference to federal poverty levels (FPL) in effect at the time of the determination. The basis for the amounts Deaconess Health System, Inc., will charge patients qualifying for financial assistance is as follows:
    1. Patients whose family income is at or below 200% of the FPL are eligible to receive free care.
    2. Patients whose family income is above 200% but not more than 350% of the FPL are eligible to receive services at a discount rate.
    3. Patients whose family income exceeds 350% of the FPL may be eligible to receive discounted rates on a case-by-case basis based on their specific circumstances, such as catastrophic illness or medical indigence, at the discretion of Deaconess Health System, Inc.
  - G. In certain situations, it may be appropriate to grant a patient financial assistance even though the patient's financial situation does not satisfy the requirements set forth in this policy. In these situations the financial assistance application and other pertinent information may be reviewed by the Deaconess Financial Assistance Committee, and a determination will be made as to the patient's eligibility for charity care.
- VI. **REFERENCES:**
  - A. This policy and procedure is owned by the director of Patient Financial Services and is coordinated with the manager of Internal Audit and the system P&P Committee. This policy has been approved by the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors.
  - B. This policy and procedure revises and rescinds policy and procedure No. 30-04 S, dated April 27, 2015.