

March 14, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject:

Approval of the Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program Policy and Rate Schedule for Services Provided at Ambulatory Care Federally Qualified Health Centers, Effective March 15, 2023; Approval of, and Authorization for the Health Care Agency (HCA) Director or Designee to Administer and Update the Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program Rate Schedule Based on the Annual Federal Poverty Guidelines Updates.

Recommendations:

1. That your Board approve the revised Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program Policy and rate schedule, effective March 15, 2023 (Exhibits 1 and 2), for services provided at ambulatory care federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), including primary care, specialty, dental, vision, ancillary, and behavioral health services, pursuant to Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as required by the Health Center Program authorized by section 330 of the Public Health Service Act.
2. That your Board approve and authorize the HCA Director or designee to administer and update the Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program Rate Schedule based on annual Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) updates.

Fiscal Impact:

There is minimal anticipated revenue impact and no expense impact for this recommendation. Collections are typically very low for these services due to the economic status of the patients being served. Ambulatory Care does not expect any notable changes in payment volume beyond typical year over year variability.

Discussion:

Ventura County is designated as a Community Health Center (Section 330(e)) grantee under the County's HRSA grant. Nineteen clinics in the County are operated through the HRSA grant program as FQHCs. FQHCs are considered the County's "safety net" providers and committed to ensuring patients receive access to quality care without regard to ability to pay. Our mission is to provide excellent comprehensive, cost-effective, compassionate health care throughout Ventura County.

The Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program is a requirement of all FQHCs under HRSA's Health Center Program. Specifically, HRSA requires that sliding fee discounts are applied to all health services within the FQHC's scope of project, based on family size and income, and structured to ensure charges are adjusted on ability to pay utilizing the most recent FPG. Additionally, patients at or below 100% of FPG must be provided a full discount or be charged a nominal fee, patients with income above 100% FPG and at or below 200% of the current FPG are provided a partial discount, and no discounts are provided to patients with incomes above 200% FPG.

HCA's Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program and rate schedule (Exhibit 4) was approved by your Board in 2020 and has been revised to include the most current FPG and all the necessary components of the HRSA requirements, including discounts for all health services within the scope of the project. A schedule of services (Exhibit 3) was developed based on complexity and type of service to better align rates and decrease barriers to care. The new rate schedule also identifies full charge for those above 200% FPG per HRSA requirements. Patients who do not qualify for a discount under the Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program may qualify for HCA's Self-Pay Discount Program that offers discounts for those above 200% FPG.

The Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program and updated schedule was reviewed and approved by the Community Health Center (CHC) Board on February 23, 2023. The CHC Board is responsible for reviewing all HCA's FQHC policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Health Center Program requirements.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, County Counsel, and Auditor-Controller's Office. If you have any questions regarding this item, please call Theresa Cho, MD, Chief Executive Officer and Medical Director, Ambulatory Care, at 805-677-5223.



Theresa Cho, M.D.
Chief Executive Officer and Medical Director, Ambulatory Care



Barry L. Zimmerman
Health Care Agency Director

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – Sliding Fee Discount Payment Program Policy
- Exhibit 2 – FQHC Rate Schedule
- Exhibit 3 – FQHC Service Schedule
- Exhibit 4 – 2020 Approved Rate Schedule