

Purpose:

Huron Medical Center is committed to treating all patients with respect, dignity and compassion regardless of their ability to pay. This policy establishes the actions that may be taken in the event of nonpayment for services provided by Huron Medical Center Hospital.

Policy:

While prompt payment of any balance due is expected, the Hospital recognizes that not all patients are financially able to pay their balances. Depending on amount owed and the responsible party's income, patients may be eligible for an extended payment plan and/or financial assistance. Eligibility for financial assistance is described in detail in the Hospital's Finance Assistance Program (FAP) policy. Emergency care is provided to patients regardless of their ability to pay, past payment history, or unpaid balances.

The Hospital will not refer accounts to a debt collection agency or take any Extraordinary Collection Activity (ECA) before reasonable attempts are made to collect the amount owed and to determine if the patient qualifies for assistance and/or a payment plan.

Reasonable efforts prior to referring an account to a debt collection agency include the following:

Three separate statements in 30 day intervals are mailed to the address on file. Statements include a summary of charges, payments and contractual adjustments as well as information regarding the Hospital's financial Assistance program.

A Final notice is mailed to the address on file. The final notice explains that the account may be referred to an outside agency if it is not paid in full, satisfactory payment arrangements are not made, or an application for financial assistance is not received or requested within 30 days of the date of the notice.

At least 120 days have elapsed since the first notice of balance due was mailed and at least 30 days have elapsed since the patient requested and was mailed or picked up a financial application.

It is the responsible party's obligation to provide a correct mailing address. If an account does not have a valid address, the determination for "reasonable effort" will have been made.

Partial payment of a balance due will not prevent referral to a debt collection agency unless formal payment arrangements have been made with the Hospital.

When a financial application is received near the end of the 120-day statement cycle a referral to a collection agency will not be made until the patient has been notified of the outcome of their application and at least 30 days have elapsed since the patient was mailed the notification.

Accounts Referred to a Debt Collection Agency:

The collection agency may initiate ECA using lawful methods of collection. This could include credit reporting to credit agencies, lawsuits or garnishments.

The responsible individual may request an application for assistance, even if an account has gone to a debt collection agency as long as 240 days have not elapsed since the date the first statement was sent to the responsible individual. If the responsible individual requests an application, they will have at least 30 days from the mailing date to return an application before ECA resumes.

If the responsible party submits an incomplete application they will be notified in writing and given an additional 30 days from the time the notice was mailed to provide the additional information before ECA resumes.

If the patient is found to be FAP eligible for a full discount, the collection agency will return the account to the Hospital, reverse any adverse credit reporting or other ECA action. When a full discount is not taken, the agency will limit collections to the balance due under the FAP guidelines.

All patients, including patients on a payment plan, who were previously denied because of missing information or referred to a debt collection agency, can submit a financial application for consideration at any time as long as 240 days have not elapsed since the first statement notice was mailed to the patient. If a patient has made a payment that exceeds the discount they are eligible for and they do not have other outstanding balances, they will be refunded any amounts paid in excess.