

**NIORARA VALLEY HOSPITAL
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to further the charitable mission of Niobrara Valley Hospital (the "Hospital") by providing financially disadvantaged and other qualified patients with an avenue to apply for and receive free care consistent with requirements of the Internal Revenue Code and implementing regulations.

I. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following classes of individuals and categories of care are eligible for financial assistance under this policy:

A. Financially Indigent

To qualify as Financially Indigent, the patient must be Uninsured or Underinsured and have a Household Income of equal to or less than 100% of Federal Poverty Level; The following definitions apply to such eligibility criteria:

"Uninsured": A patient who (i) has no health insurance or coverage under governmental health care programs, and (ii) is not eligible for any other third party payment such as worker's compensation or claims against others involving accidents.

"Underinsured": A patient who (i) has limited health insurance coverage that does not provide coverage for hospital services or other medically necessary services provided by the Hospital, or (ii) has exceeded the maximum liability under his/her insurance coverage.

"Household Income": The total income of all members living in the patient's household over the twelve (12) months prior to application for assistance under this policy.

B. Failure to Apply for Medicaid

Patients who may be eligible for Medicaid and fail to apply for Medicaid within thirty (30) days of the Hospital's request are not considered eligible for financial assistance under this policy.

C. Categories of Care Eligible for Financial Assistance

Provided that the patient qualifies for Financially Indigent, the following classes of care are eligible for financial assistance under this policy:

- Emergency medical care
- Medically necessary care

Regardless of a patient's status as Financially Indigent, cosmetic procedures are not eligible for financial assistance under this policy.

II. COVERED PROVIDERS

Care provided by the Hospital and Hospital-employed physicians and practitioners practicing at Niobrara Valley Hospital Medical Clinics are covered by this policy.

Care provided by independent community physicians and other independent service providers is not subject to this policy. Patients should contact these other providers to determine whether care is eligible for financial assistance.

Patients may obtain a current list of providers who are and are not subject to this policy at no charge by visiting the business office at Niobrara Valley Hospital or calling 1-402-569-2451 or visiting nvhcares.org.

III. LIMITATION ON CHARGES & CALCULATION OF AMOUNT OWED

Patients who are deemed to be eligible for financial assistance under this policy will not be charged for care covered by this policy more than Amounts Generally Billed by the Hospital to individuals who have health insurance covering such care. Discounts granted to eligible patients under this policy will be taken from gross charges.

A. Calculation of Amounts Generally Billed

The "Amount Generally Billed" or "AGB" is the amount the Hospital generally bills to insured patients. The Hospital determines its AGB utilizing the method detailed below.

The Hospital utilizes the prospective method to establish AGB. Accordingly, the AGB equals the amount Medicare would allow for the care provided if the patient was a Medicare fee-for-service beneficiary, including all co-pays and deductibles.

B. Amount of Financial Assistance/Discount

Patients who qualify for financial assistance as **Financially Indigent** are eligible for financial assistance based upon an all or nothing policy.

IV. APPLICATION PROCESS & DETERMINATION

Patients who believe they may qualify for financial assistance under this policy are required to submit an application on the Hospital's financial assistance application form during the Application Period. Completed applications must be returned to: Business Office, Niobrara

Valley Hospital, PO Box 118, Lynch NE 68746 or delivered to the Business office at Niobrara Valley Hospital.

For purposes of this policy, the "Application Period" begins on the date care is provided to the patient and ends on the later of (i) the 240th day after the date the first post-discharge (whether inpatient or outpatient) billing statement is provided to the patient OR (ii) not less than 30 days after the date the Hospital provides the patient the requisite final notice to commence extraordinary collection actions ("ECAs").

Patients may obtain a copy of this policy, a plain language summary of this policy, and a financial assistance application free of charge (i) by mail by calling 402-569-2451, (ii) by e-mail (upon patient election) by e-mailing nvadmin@threeriver.net, (iii) by download from nvhcared.org, or (iv) in person at (a) the emergency room, (b) any admission areas, or (c) the office of the patient financial counselor located at the hospital's business office.

A. Completed Applications

Upon receipt, the Hospital will suspend any ECAs taken against the patient and process, review and make a determination on completed financial assistance applications submitted during the Application Period as set forth below. The Hospital may, in its own discretion, accept complete financial assistance applications submitted after the Application Period.

Determination of eligibility for financial assistance shall be made by the following individual(s):

<u>Potential Write-off Amount</u>	<u>Approval Authority</u>
\$0.00- & Above	Hospital Administrator

Unless otherwise delayed as set forth herein, such determination shall be made within (30) days of submission of a timely completed application. Patients will be notified of the Hospital's determination as set forth in the Billing and Collection provisions detailed *herein*.

To be considered "complete" a financial assistance application must provide all information requested on the form and in the instructions to the form.

The Hospital will not consider an application incomplete or deny financial assistance based upon the failure to provide any information that was not requested in the application or accompanying instructions. The Hospital may take into account in its determination (and in determining whether the patient's application is complete) information provided by the patient other than in the application.

For questions and/or assistance with filling out a financial assistance application, the patient may contact patient financial services at 402-569-2451 or email to nvadmin@threeriver.net.

If a patient submits a completed financial assistance application during the Application Period and the Hospital determines that the patient may be eligible for participation in Medicaid, the Hospital will notify the patient in writing of such potential eligibility and request that the patient take steps necessary to enroll in such program. In such circumstances the Hospital will delay the processing of the patient's financial assistance application until the patient's application for Medicaid is completed, submitted to the requisite governmental authority, and a determination has been made. If the patient fails to submit an application within thirty (30) days of the Hospital's request, the hospital will process the completed financial assistance application and financial assistance will be denied due to the failure to meet the eligibility criteria set forth herein.

B. Incomplete Applications

Incomplete applications will not be processed by the Hospital. If a patient submits an incomplete application, the Hospital will suspend ECAs and provide the patient with written notice setting forth the additional information or documentation required to complete the application. The written notice will include the contact information (telephone number, and physical location of the office) of patient financial assistance. The notice will provide the patient with at least fifteen (15) days to provide the required information; provided, however, that if the patient submits a completed application prior to the end of the Application Period, the Hospital will accept and process the application as complete.

C. Presumptive Eligibility

If the hospital desires to use presumptive eligibility, choose one of the following:

The Hospital reserves the right to provide financial assistance even though an application has not been submitted, in which case the patient will be provided the maximum possible level of financial assistance.

V. COLLECTION ACTIONS

All billing statements will include a conspicuous written notice regarding the availability of assistance, including the contact information identifying where the patient may obtain further information and financial assistance-related documents and the website where such documents may be found.

The Hospital or its authorized representatives may refer a patient's bill to a third party collection agency or take any or all of the following extraordinary collection actions ("ECAs") in the event of non-payment of outstanding bills

- Reporting to credit bureaus
- Legal suit
- Selling the account to a third party
- Garnishment of wages

The Hospital may refer a patient's bill to a collection agency ten (10) days from the date the first bill for care was provided to the patient. The Hospital will not take ECAs against a patient or any other individual who has accepted or is required to accept financial responsibility for a patient unless and until the Hospital has made "reasonable efforts" to determine whether the patient is eligible for financial assistance under this policy. The Hospital Administrators is responsible to determine whether the Hospital has engaged in reasonable efforts to determine whether a patient is eligible for financial assistance.

A. No Application Submitted

If a patient has not submitted a financial assistance application, the Hospital has taken "reasonable efforts" so long as it:

1. Does not take ECAs against the patient for at least 120 days from the date the Hospital provides the patient with the first post-discharge bill for care; and
2. Provides at least thirty (30) days' notice to the patient that:
 - Notifies the patient of the availability of financial assistance;
 - Identifies the specific ECA(s) the Hospital intends to initiate against the patient, and
 - States a deadline after which ECAs may be initiated that is no earlier than 30 days after the date the notice is provided to the patient;
3. Provides a plain language summary of the financial assistance policy with the aforementioned notice; and
4. Makes a reasonable effort to orally notify the patient about the potential availability of financial assistance at least 30 days prior to initiating ECAs against the patient describing how the individual may obtain assistance with the financial assistance application process.
5. If the patient has been granted financial assistance based on a presumptive eligibility determination, the Hospital has provided the patient with the notice required in the financial assistance policy.

B. Incomplete Applications

If a patient submits an incomplete financial assistance application during the Application Period, "reasonable efforts" will have been satisfied if the Hospital:

1. Provides the patient with a written notice setting forth the additional information or documentation required to complete the application. The written notice shall include the contact information (telephone number, and physical location of the office) of the

Hospital department that can provide a financial assistance application and assistance with the application process. The notice shall provide the patient with at least fifteen (15) days to provide the required information; and

2. Suspends ECAs that have been taken against the patient, if any, for not less than the response period allotted in the notice.

If the patient fails to submit the requested information within the allotted time period, ECAs may resume; provided, however, that if the patient submits the requested information during the Application Period, the Hospital must suspend ECAs and make a determination on the application.

C. Completed Applications

If a patient submits a completed financial assistance application, "reasonable efforts" will have been made if the Hospital does the following:

1. Suspends all ECAs taken against the individual, if any;
2. Makes a determination as to eligibility for financial assistance as set forth in the financial assistance policy; and
3. Provides the patient with a written notice either (i) setting forth the financial assistance for which the patient is eligible or (ii) denying the application. The notice must include the basis for the determination.

If the Hospital has requested that the patient apply for Medicaid, the Hospital will suspend any ECAs it has taken against the patient until the patient's Medicaid application has been processed or the patient's financial assistance application is denied due to the failure to timely apply for Medicaid coverage.

VI. EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Emergency medical treatment will be provided without regard to ability to pay and regardless whether the patient qualifies for financial assistance under the financial assistance policy, See Policy #6010-320. The Hospital will not take any action that may interfere with the provision of emergency medical treatment, for example, by demanding payment prior to receiving treatment for emergency medical conditions or permitting debt collection activities that interfere with the provision of emergency medical care in the emergency department. Emergency medical treatment will be provided in accordance with Hospital policies governing and implementing the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act.

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