
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1359

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By House Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Jenkins, Harris, Macri, Kilduff, Riccelli, Cody, Slatter, Appleton, Kloba, Frame, and Doglio)

READ FIRST TIME 02/13/17.

1 AN ACT Relating to notice of charity care availability at time of
2 billing and collection; amending RCW 70.170.060; and providing an
3 effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 70.170.060 and 1998 c 245 s 118 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) No hospital or its medical staff shall adopt or maintain
8 admission practices or policies which result in:

9 (a) A significant reduction in the proportion of patients who
10 have no third-party coverage and who are unable to pay for hospital
11 services;

12 (b) A significant reduction in the proportion of individuals
13 admitted for inpatient hospital services for which payment is, or is
14 likely to be, less than the anticipated charges for or costs of such
15 services; or

16 (c) The refusal to admit patients who would be expected to
17 require unusually costly or prolonged treatment for reasons other
18 than those related to the appropriateness of the care available at
19 the hospital.

20 (2) No hospital shall adopt or maintain practices or policies
21 which would deny access to emergency care based on ability to pay. No

1 hospital which maintains an emergency department shall transfer a
2 patient with an emergency medical condition or who is in active labor
3 unless the transfer is performed at the request of the patient or is
4 due to the limited medical resources of the transferring hospital.
5 Hospitals must follow reasonable procedures in making transfers to
6 other hospitals including confirmation of acceptance of the transfer
7 by the receiving hospital.

8 (3) The department shall develop definitions by rule, as
9 appropriate, for subsection (1) of this section and, with reference
10 to federal requirements, subsection (2) of this section. The
11 department shall monitor hospital compliance with subsections (1) and
12 (2) of this section. The department shall report individual instances
13 of possible noncompliance to the state attorney general or the
14 appropriate federal agency.

15 (4) The department shall establish and maintain by rule,
16 consistent with the definition of charity care in RCW 70.170.020, the
17 following:

18 (a) Uniform procedures, data requirements, and criteria for
19 identifying patients receiving charity care;

20 (b) A definition of residual bad debt including reasonable and
21 uniform standards for collection procedures to be used in efforts to
22 collect the unpaid portions of hospital charges that are the
23 patient's responsibility.

24 (5) For the purpose of providing charity care, each hospital
25 shall develop, implement, and maintain a charity care policy which,
26 consistent with subsection (1) of this section, shall enable people
27 below the federal poverty level access to appropriate hospital-based
28 medical services, and a sliding fee schedule for determination of
29 discounts from charges for persons who qualify for such discounts by
30 January 1, 1990. The department shall develop specific guidelines to
31 assist hospitals in setting sliding fee schedules required by this
32 section. All persons with family income below one hundred percent of
33 the federal poverty standard shall be deemed charity care patients
34 for the full amount of hospital charges, provided that such persons
35 are not eligible for other private or public health coverage
36 sponsorship. Persons who may be eligible for charity care shall be
37 notified by the hospital.

38 (6) All hospital billing statements must include the following
39 statement in English and the non-English language most commonly

1 spoken by the non-English speaking or limited-English speaking
2 population in the hospital's service area:

3 You may qualify for a discount for some or all of your hospital
4 bill, whether or not you have insurance. Please contact our
5 financial assistance office at

6 (7) Each hospital shall make every reasonable effort to determine
7 the existence or nonexistence of private or public sponsorship which
8 might cover in full or part the charges for care rendered by the
9 hospital to a patient; the family income of the patient as classified
10 under federal poverty income guidelines; and the eligibility of the
11 patient for charity care as defined in this chapter and in accordance
12 with hospital policy. An initial determination of sponsorship status
13 shall precede collection efforts directed at the patient.

14 ~~((7))~~ (8) The department shall monitor the distribution of
15 charity care among hospitals, with reference to factors such as
16 relative need for charity care in hospital service areas and trends
17 in private and public health coverage. The department shall prepare
18 reports that identify any problems in distribution which are in
19 contradiction of the intent of this chapter. The report shall include
20 an assessment of the effects of the provisions of this chapter on
21 access to hospital and health care services, as well as an evaluation
22 of the contribution of all purchasers of care to hospital charity
23 care.

24 ~~((8))~~ (9) The department shall issue a report on the subjects
25 addressed in this section at least annually, with the first report
26 due on July 1, 1990.

27 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. This act takes effect October 1, 2017.

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