



Mercy Medical Center Billing and Collections Policy

Policy/Purpose

Mercy Medical Center, in keeping with its mission, vision, and values, is committed to providing quality health care and service equally to all patients. In order to continue in this mission, it is essential that payment be received for services rendered. This policy describes the actions Mercy Medical Center may take to collect hospital charges for services provided to patients.

Definitions

1. **Emergency Medical Condition:** Defined within the meaning of section 1867 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395dd).
2. **Extraordinary Collection Actions (ECAs):** The following actions taken by a hospital facility against an individual related to obtaining payment of a bill for care covered under the hospital facility's financial assistance policy:
 - i. Selling an individual's debt to another party.
 - ii. Reporting adverse information about the individual to consumer credit reporting agencies or credit bureaus.
 - iii. Deferring or denying, or requiring a payment before providing, medically necessary care.
 - iv. Actions that require a legal or judicial process, including, but not limited to, foreclosing on an individual's real property; commencing a civil action against an individual; and garnishing an individual's wages.
1. **Medically Necessary:** As defined by Medicare (services or items reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of illness or injury).
2. **Uninsured:** The patient has no level of insurance or third party assistance to assist with meeting his/her payment obligations.

Emergency Services

All patients with emergency medical conditions will be treated and/or admitted to Mercy Medical Center, regardless of their ability to pay for services, pursuant to the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA).

Financial Assistance

Mercy Medical Center maintains a financial assistance program to assist patients that are in need. Please see the Plain Language Financial Assistance Summary or the 501(r) Financial Assistance Policy for further information concerning how to apply for this program and eligibility requirements. These policies are available at all registration desks, on Mercy Medical Center's website, www.mercycare.org or by contacting a Financial Advocate.

Mercy Medical Center will accept and process applications for financial assistance for at least 240 days after the date of the first post-discharge billing statement. Mercy Medical Center will take steps to notify patients about the Hospital's Financial Assistance Policy and will not engage in Extraordinary Collection Actions for at least 120 days from the date of the patient's first post-discharge billing statement.

Mercy Medical Center may make presumptive eligibility determinations for financial assistance. This means that the Hospital may determine that a patient is eligible for financial assistance without obtaining additional information directly from the patient. If Mercy Medical Center presumptively determines that a patient is eligible for financial assistance, but eligible for less than the most generous assistance, Mercy Medical Center will notify the patient of the determination, inform the patient how to apply for more generous financial assistance, and give the patient a reasonable amount of time to apply for more generous assistance.

Self Pay Accounts

An account becomes "self-pay" once all third party payer efforts have become exhausted, or for patients who either do not have insurance or are not covered for a service received under their existing policy. As a courtesy to patients and their families, Mercy Medical Center will submit hospital and hospital-based physician claims to the respective carrier once correct insurance information is provided by the patient or designee.

It is the patient's responsibility to provide the hospital with proper insurance information such as policy number, copy of the card, secondary, tertiary, or other insurance that could be responsible to pay. If this information is provided after said insurance required timely filing restrictions the account may be considered "self-pay."

If complete insurance is not provided at the time of service, or the coordination of benefits between payers is missing, the account will be processed as "self-pay," and the patient and/or guarantor will receive monthly statements.

An anticipated insurance payment does not replace the patient's obligation to pay any outstanding balance. Mercy Medical Center will make every effort to bill the insurance company, if possible, but the responsibility of payment is ultimately the patient's. Should the third party payer not pay within a reasonable length of time (estimated timeframe 45 to 60 days from claim submission), the patient may receive a statement and be considered the responsible party for the total amount due. Any issues on non-payment must be resolved by the patient and the insurance company involved.

Mercy Medical Center will assist the patient and family with necessary information to aide them in their resolution of said services.

Discounts

Patients that are uninsured may be eligible for a self-pay discount. This discount is not available for certain procedures such as cosmetic procedures, smoking cessation, and already discounted services or if you have some form of insurance coverage. This discount is taken on the patient's first statement. More information is available in Mercy Medical Center's Self Pay Discount Policy.

If you did not receive a discount and feel you should have please contact the business office immediately at 319-369-4505 to talk with a Financial Advocate.

Pre-Payments Prior to Service

Patients that are seeking elective or scheduled services may be requested to make partial or full payment prior to service. With partial payments, patients will be asked to set up monthly payment plans.

Patients will be contacted by one of Mercy Medical Center Financial Advocates either by phone or mail to discuss the patient responsibility portion. Again, these discussions will only take place for non-emergent services.

Collection Procedures

Once an account reaches the "self-pay" status, a statement will be generated to the guarantor of the account. It is the patient's responsibility to contact Mercy Medical Center Patient Accounts Department (this phone number is listed on the statement) to resolve any outstanding financial issues.

Accounts will be referred to outside collection agencies for the following reasons:

1. The patient has failed to set up an agreeable monthly payment arrangement.
2. The patient account has become delinquent due to missed monthly payment and no contact from the patient to discuss the missed payment.
3. Mercy Medical Center receives returned mail/or statements with no forwarding address made available.

Mercy Medical Center works with agencies to try to avoid the use of Extraordinary Collection Actions (ECAs). Patients have the ability to set up new payments with these agencies. Mercy Medical Center will take steps to notify patients about the Hospital's Financial Assistance Policy and will not engage in ECAs for at least 120 days from the date of the patient's first post-discharge billing statement.

Before any ECA activity, Mercy Medical Center will make reasonable efforts, including screening patients for presumptive financial assistance program eligibility, to determine if a patient's account would have qualified for Mercy Medical Center's Financial Assistance Program. At least 30 days before any ECA

activity, Mercy Medical Center will notify patients that the Hospital may begin certain collection actions 30 days after the date of the notice and that financial assistance is available for eligible individuals.

Patient accounts will be aged for bad debt purposes from the date of self-pay responsibility determination. Once an account is deemed to be self-pay, and meets the minimum age of 121 days from the date of self-pay determination, the account will be eligible for bad debt adjustment internally.

Related Documents

EMTALA Policy

Self-Pay Discount Policy

501(r) Financial Assistance Policy

Financial Assistance Plain Language Summary