

**Taos Professional Services
Women's Health Institute, Taos Primary Care, and Taos Clinic for
Children and Youth
Sliding Fee Discount Program Policy**

SUBJECT: Sliding Fee Discount Program

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2024

POLICY: To make available free or discounted services to those in need.

PURPOSE: All patients seeking health care services at Women's Health Institute Clinic), Taos Primary Care, and Taos Clinic for Children and Youth are assured that they will be served regardless of their ability to pay. No one is refused service because of lack of financial means to pay. This program is designed to provide free or discounted care to those who have no means, or limited means, to pay for their medical services (uninsured or underinsured).

Women's Health Institute, Taos Primary Care, and Taos Clinic for Children and Youth will offer a Sliding Fee Discount Program to all who are unable to pay for their services. Clinics will base program eligibility on a person's ability to pay and will not discriminate on the basis of an individual's race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or gender identify. The Federal Poverty Guidelines are used in creating and annually updating the sliding fee schedule to determine eligibility.

PROCEDURE:

The following guidelines are to be followed in providing the Sliding Fee Discount Program.

1. **Notification:** Clinics will notify patients of the Sliding Fee Discount Program by:
 - Notification of the Sliding Fee Discount Program will be offered to each patient upon each visit.
 - Sliding Fee Discount Program application will be included with collection notices sent out by Taos Professional Services.
 - An explanation of our Sliding Fee Discount Program and our application form are available on Taos Health System, Inc.'s website.
 - Taos Professional Services' Clinics places notification of Sliding Fee Discount Program in the clinic's waiting area.

2. **Request for discount:** Requests for discounted services may be made by patients, family members, social services staff or others who are aware of existing financial hardship. The Sliding Fee Discount Program will only be made available for clinic visits. All other services provided by Taos Professional Services' Clinics, other than clinic visits for the three clinics listed above, will fall under the Taos Health System Financial Assistance Policy.

Applications may be obtained in the following ways:

- Online at www.holycrossmedicalcenter.org
- Picked up at Holy Cross Hospital or Women's Health Institute, Taos Primary Care and Taos Clinic for Children & Youth
- By contacting a customer service representative at 575-737-3454.
- By contacting a financial counselor at 575-751-5786.

A copy of the policy will be provided by mail, free of charge, upon request to a financial counselor.

3. **Administration:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program procedure will be administered through the Financial Counselor. Information about the Sliding Fee Discount Program policy and procedure will be provided to patients. The Financial Counselor is to offer assistance with the completion of the application. Dignity and confidentiality will be respected for all who seek and/or are provided with health care services.
4. **Completion of Application:** The patient/responsible party must complete the Sliding Fee Discount Program application in its entirety. Staff (financial counselor) will be available, as needed, to assist patient/responsible party with applications. By signing the Sliding Fee Discount Program application, people are confirming their income to Taos Professional Services as disclosed on the application form.
5. **Eligibility:** Discounts will be based on income and family size only.
 - a. Family is defined as: a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family. Taos Professional Services' Clinics will also accept non-related household members when calculating family size.
 - b. Income includes gross wages; salaries; tips; income from business and self-employment; unemployment compensation; workers' compensation; Social Security; Supplemental Security Income; veterans' payments; survivor benefits; pension or retirement income; interest; dividends; royalties; income from rental properties, estates, and trust; alimony; child support; assistance from outside the household; and other miscellaneous sources.
6. **Income verification:** Applicants may provide one of the following: prior year W-2, two most recent pay stubs, letter from employer, or Form 4506-T (if W-2 not filed). Self-employed individuals will be required to submit details of the most recent three months of income and expenses for the business. Adequate information must be made available to determine eligibility for the program. Self-declaration of Income may be used. Patients who are unable to provide written verification may provide a signed statement of income.
7. **Discounts:** Those with incomes at or below 100% of poverty will receive a full 100% discount for health care services. Those with incomes above 100% of poverty, but at or below 200% of poverty, will be charged a nominal fee according to the attached sliding fee schedule. The sliding fee schedule will be updated during the first quarter of every calendar year with the latest Federal Poverty Line Guidelines.

8. **Nominal Fee:** Patients with incomes above 100% of poverty, but at or below 200% poverty will be charged a nominal fee according to the attached sliding fee schedule and based on their family size and income. However, patients will not be denied services due to an inability to pay. The nominal fee is not a threshold for receiving care, and thus is not a minimum fee or co-payment.
9. **Waiving of Charges:** In certain situations, patients may not be able to pay the nominal or discount fee. The waiving of charges must be approved by Taos Professional Services' Clinics designated official (Chief Financial Officer). Any waiving of charges should be documented in the patient's file along with an explanation.
10. **Applicant notification:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program determination will be provided to the applicant(s) in writing and will include the percentage of Sliding Fee Discount Program write-off, or, if applicable, the reason for denial. If the application is approved for less than a 100% discount or denied, Taos Professional Services' Clinics will work with the patient and/or responsible party to establish payment arrangements. Sliding Fee Discount Program applications cover outstanding patient balances for six months prior to application date and any balances incurred within 12 months after the approved date, unless their financial situation changes significantly. The applicant has the option to reapply after the 12 months have expired or anytime there has been a significant change in family income. When the applicant reapplies, the lookback period will be the lesser of six months or the expiration of their last Sliding Fee Discount Program application.
11. **Refusal to Pay:** If a patient verbally expresses an unwillingness to pay or vacates the premises without paying for services, the patient will be contacted in writing regarding their payment obligations. If the patient is not on the sliding fee schedule, a copy of the sliding fee discount program application will be sent with the notice. If the patient does not make an effort to pay or fails to respond within 60 days, this constitutes refusal to pay. At this point in time, Taos Professional Services' Clinics can explore options not limited to, but including offering the patient a payment plan, waiving of charges, or referring the patient to collections.
12. **Record keeping:** Information related to Sliding Fee Discount Program decisions will be maintained and preserved in a centralized confidential file located in the Financial Counselor's Office, in an effort to preserve the dignity of those receiving free or discounted care.
 - a. Applicants that have been approved for the Sliding Fee Discount Program will be logged in Taos Professional Services' Clinics practice management system, noting names of applicants, dates of coverage and percentage of coverage.
 - b. The Financial Counselor will maintain an additional monthly log identifying Sliding Fee Discount Program recipients and dollar amounts. Denials and applications not returned will also be logged.

13. **Policy and procedure review:** The Sliding Fee Schedule will be updated based on the current Federal Poverty Guidelines. Taos Professional Services' Clinics will also review possible changes in policy and procedures for examining institutional practices which may serve as barriers preventing eligible patients from having access to community care provisions.

14. **Budget:** During the annual budget process, an estimated amount of Sliding Fee Discount Program service will be placed into the budget as a deduction from revenue.

ATTACHMENTS:

2023 Sliding Fee Schedule

Patient Application for the Sliding Fee Discount Program

APPROVAL NEEDED:

Patient Access Director

Date

Patient Financial Services Director

Date

Chief Financial Officer

Date