

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Patient Assistance Policy</b>	<b>Policy # 110-0057</b>
<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Policy</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Procedure</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Guideline</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Protocol</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Plan</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Committee Approval</b>	<b>Finance Committee</b>	

**Purpose:** To ensure that financial issues do not prevent patients from seeking or receiving care.

**Policy:** Patient assistance will be considered for those individuals who are unable to pay for their care. Eligibility will be based upon a determination of financial need in accordance with this Policy. It shall not take into account age, gender, race, social or immigrant status, sexual orientation or religious affiliation. Patient assistance is secondary to all other financial resources available.

**Definitions: (if applicable)**

Patient Assistance: Healthcare services that have or will be provided but are not expected to be paid. Patient assistance results from St. Peter's policy to provide healthcare services free or at a discount to individuals who meet this policy's criteria.

Family: Using the Census Bureau definition, a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage or adoption. Dependents are defined by Internal Revenue Service rules.

Family Income: Family Income is determined using the Census Bureau definition which uses the following income when computing federal poverty guidelines:

- Includes earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates, trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, assistance from outside the household, and other miscellaneous sources;
- Noncash benefits (such as food stamps and housing subsidies) do not count;
- Determined on a before-tax basis;
- Excludes capital gains or losses; and
- If a person lives with a family, includes the income of all family members (Non-relatives, such as housemates, do not count).

Uninsured: The patient has no level of insurance or third-party assistance to aid with meeting his/her payment obligations.

Underinsured: The patient has some level of insurance but still has out-of-pocket expenses that exceed his/her financial abilities.

**Procedure:**

**1. Patient Assistance Guidelines.**

- Services eligible under this Policy will be made available to the patient on a sliding fee scale as described in this section.
  - Patients whose family income is at or below 275% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible to receive free care.
  - Patients whose family income is above 275% but not more than 350% of the FPL are eligible to receive a discount of 60% of their account balance. This discount approximates the percentage the hospital receives from the Medicare program.
  - St. Peter's Health will limit the amount of medical debt that a patient can incur in a 12 month period to 25% of household income. Medical debt includes all medical costs for which St.

Peter's billing office is responsible to bill. Patients whose household income exceeds 700% of FPL will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## **2. Determination of Financial Need**

- Financial need will be determined in accordance with procedures that involve an assessment of financial need; and may:
  - Include an application process, in which the patient or the patient's guarantor are required to cooperate and supply information and documentation relevant to making a determination of financial need;
  - Include reasonable efforts by St. Peter's Health to explore alternative sources of payment and coverage from public and private payment programs and to assist patients to apply for such programs;
  - Take into account the patient's available assets and all other financial resources available to the patient; and
  - Include a review of the patient's outstanding accounts receivable and the patient's payment history.
- The need for assistance shall be re-evaluated at annual intervals.
- Requests for patient assistance shall be processed promptly.
  - St. Peter's shall notify the patient in writing within 30 days of receipt of a completed application.
  - Collection activity will be suspended while a financial assistance application is under review.
  - A note will be entered into the patient's account to highlight that a patient assistance application is pending.

## **3. Presumptive Financial Assistance Eligibility**

- There are instances when a patient may appear eligible for discounts, but there is no financial assistance form on file.
  - Often there is adequate information to determine a need for assistance.
  - Patients that are homeless or deceased with no estate may be presumed to be eligible for patient assistance without the completion of an application.
  - These situations would be eligible for 100% write off of the account balance.

## **4. Household Assets**

- Household assets may be included in the calculation of eligibility for assistance.
  - A patient's primary residence, retirement assets (as defined by the Internal Revenue Service) and the patient's primary automobile are excluded from the calculation of household assets. In addition, the first \$10,000 is excluded. The balance of net assets will be added to the patient's household income in section E above.

## **5. Communication of the Patient Assistance Program to Patients and the Public**

- Notification about financial assistance from St. Peter's Health shall be communicated by various means
  - These may include the publication of notices in patient bills and by posting notices in public places that St. Peter's may elect.
  - This policy will also be posted on the St. Peter's website.
  - Referral of patients for financial assistance may be made by any member of the St. Peter's staff or medical staff.
  - A request for patient assistance may be made by the patient, a family member, or friend of the patient.