

Charleston/Dorchester Community Mental Health Center

Collection of Unpaid Client Balances Policy

Policy

This policy addresses the collection of unpaid client balances.

I. Purpose:

Charleston/Dorchester Community Mental Health Center (CDCMHC) recognizes the value of the professional services we provide to clients. We strive to create a professional atmosphere which conveys to clients a firm expectation that services will be paid for in a timely manner. We also recognize that circumstances can exist which either temporarily or indefinitely limit a client's ability to meet their financial obligations. CDCMHC subscribes to the principle that no person will be denied service on the basis of inability to pay. However, the corollary to that principal is that a person who has the ability to pay for services, but fails or refuses to do so may be denied non-emergent services. CDCMHC has limited financial resources. In order to be able to continue to provide services to the many persons in the CDCMHC service area who are in need of mental health services, the Center will consider discontinuing routine scheduled services to clients with the ability to pay for services who refuse to make good faith efforts to make payments towards an unpaid balance or clients who agree to make regular payments but do not follow through with their commitment. To address this issue we establish the following policy:

II. Responsibilities:

All CDCMHC staff will adhere to this policy.

III. Procedure:

- A. Payment or co-payment in full for all professional services is expected at the time the services are provided unless other arrangements have been made.
- B. CDCMHC adheres to all DMH guidelines regarding hardship reductions based on a client's inability to pay.
- C. Upon request, CDCMHC will assist any client in the development of a personalized payment plan to address any unpaid balance. This plan will include regular installments paid at least monthly and will take into account the clients current financial situation and ability to pay. Assistance with the actual development of a payment plan will be provided by designated support staff, not by clinicians.
- D. CDCMHC may adjust or amend a payment plan if a client's financial situation changes during the course of treatment.

E. The following action will be taken for any client account with an unpaid balance of \$500.00 or more AND no payment activity for 60 days or more:

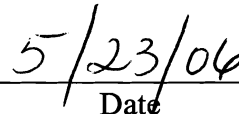
1. Client's case manager will be notified of the delinquent status of the client's account in order to address the issue in a therapeutic setting with the client and properly document this in the client's clinical record.
2. If it is determined that a client has the ability to pay all or a portion of the outstanding charges and is not making a good faith effort to pay, the client will be notified verbally and/or in writing that their case will be reviewed for closure due to noncompliance with treatment as evidenced by failure to make a good faith effort to pay for the services they have received.
3. Regularly scheduled routine non-emergent services will be suspended until a decision regarding closure is made. If at any time prior to the decision the client begins making a good faith effort to pay their past due charges, the client shall be allowed to make a new appointment for services.
4. If a careful clinical review of the case leads to the conclusion that the client's failure to pay for services is due to a lack of readiness for treatment or is an issue of noncompliance, and is not due to a bona fide inability to pay, then the case may be closed. Upon notification of closure, the client will also be informed that they may still receive emergency services regardless of the status of their account. They will also be informed that they may return to routine treatment once they reestablish their compliance by making a payment towards their unpaid balance, and thereafter by making a good faith effort to pay for their services.

F. CDCMHC WILL ALWAYS provide emergency services to ANY person regardless of the individual's unpaid balance or the current status of their case and without any regard to their ability to pay for services. Emergency services may include assessments, preparation of requests for emergency orders of detention, acute crisis stabilization services, facilitation of an emergency inpatient hospitalization, *court ordered services or any other service deemed by clinical staff to be necessary to address a psychiatric or mental health emergency which poses an imminent threat to the safety of the client or others.

*In some cases routine scheduled court-ordered services may be temporarily suspended upon notification of the court that the client is noncompliant with the terms of treatment due to refusal to pay for services rendered.



Deborah S. DiNovo, M.Ed., LPCS
Executive Director


Date