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Owner:	Renee Frey: PFS Manager
Policy Area:	Admin - Leadership (LD)
Scopes:	

## Charity Care

### A. POLICY

It is the policy of St. Rose Hospital to provide Financial Assistance, consistent with this policy, in the form of free or discounted care to eligible:

1. **Low-income Uninsured Patients**  
(Full Charity Care, Partial Charity Care, Special Circumstances Charity Care)
2. **Patients with High Medical Costs**  
(High Medical Cost Charity Care)

Any modification of this policy must be approved in writing by St. Rose Hospital's Chief Financial Officer. St. Rose Hospital will also provide certain discounts for uninsured patients who do not otherwise qualify for Financial Assistance pursuant to a separate policy.

### PURPOSE

This policy is intended to:

1. Define the forms of available Financial Assistance and the associated eligibility criteria; and
2. Establish the processes that patients shall follow in applying for Financial Assistance and the process St. Rose Hospital will follow in reviewing applications for Financial Assistance; and
3. Provide a means of review in the event of a dispute over a Financial Assistance determination; and
4. Provide administrative and accounting guidelines to assist with identifying, classifying and reporting Financial Assistance; and
5. Establish guidelines and standards that St. Rose Hospital will follow with respect to the collection of patient debt including patients who are eligible for Financial Assistance.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. **Scope of Policy.** This policy does not create an obligation for St. Rose Hospital to pay for charges of physicians or other medical providers including anesthesiologists, radiologists, emergency department physicians, pathologists, etc., not included in the hospital bill.
- B. **Emergency Department Physicians.** An emergency physician, as defined in California Health & Safety Code § 127450, who provides emergency medical services at St. Rose Hospital is also required by law to

provide discounts to uninsured patients or patients with high medical costs who are at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty level. This statement shall not be construed to impose any additional responsibilities upon St. Rose Hospital.

## DEFINITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

**Financial Assistance is available to eligible patients who receive Covered Services and who follow applicable procedures (such as completing applications and providing required information).**

- A. **Financial Assistance.** The term Financial Assistance refers to Full and Partial Charity Care, Special Circumstances Charity Care, and High Medical Cost Charity Care. Guidelines for determining when the Financial Assistance policy applies to particular circumstances that arise during the ordinary course of business are set forth in **Exhibit A**.
1. **Full Charity Care.** Full Charity Care is a complete (100%) write off of the gross billed/undiscounted charges for the Covered Services provided to the patient less any payments made by the patient. Full Charity Care is available to patients:
    - a. Whose Family Incomes are at or below 200 % of the most recent Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (**Exhibit B**); and
    - b. Who have no source of payment for any portion of their medical expenses, including without limitation, commercial or other insurance, government sponsored healthcare benefit programs or third party liability.
  2. **Partial Charity Care.** Partial Charity Care is a partial write-off of St. Rose Hospital's undiscounted charges for Covered Services available to patients:
    - a. Whose Family Incomes are between 200 % and 500 % of the federal poverty level according to the most recent Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (**Exhibit B**); and
    - b. Who have no source of payment for any portion of their medical expenses, including without limitation, commercial or other insurance, government sponsored health care benefit programs or third party liability.
    - c. For patients whose Family Incomes are between 200 % and 350 % of the most recent Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (**Exhibit B**), St. Rose Hospital shall limit expected payments for Covered Services to an amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the gross billed/undiscounted charges for the Covered Services provided to the patient less any payments made by the patient. St. Rose Hospital has set the amount of expected payment to be less than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal or another government sponsored program of health benefits and shall annually review the discounted provided under this subsection so as to ensure that the expected payment is no greater than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal, or another government sponsored health program of health benefits in which St. Rose Hospital participates.
    - d. For patients whose Family Incomes are between 350 % and 500 % of the most recent Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (**Exhibit B**) the expected payment shall limit expected payments for Covered Services to an amount equal to fifteen percent (15%) of the gross billed charges for the Covered Services provided to the patient less any payments made by the patient. St. Rose Hospital has set the amount of expected payment to be less than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal or another government sponsored

program of health benefits and shall annually review the discounted provided under this subsection so as to ensure that the expected payment is no greater than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal, or another government sponsored health program of health benefits in which St. Rose Hospital participates.

- e. St. Rose Hospital has set the amount of expected payment for patients whose Family Incomes are between 200% and 500% of the most recent Federal Poverty Income Guidelines to be less than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal or another government sponsored program of health benefits shall annually review the discounts so as to ensure that the expected payment is no greater than the greatest amount St. Rose Hospital would expect to receive from Medicare, Medi-Cal, or another government sponsored health program of health benefits in which St. Rose Hospital participates.

3. **Special Circumstances Charity Care.** Special Circumstances Charity Care allows Uninsured Patients who do not meet the Financial Assistance Criteria set forth in Section 1 or 2 above, or who are unable to follow specified hospital procedures, to receive a complete or partial write-off of St. Rose Hospital's undiscounted charges for Covered Services, with the approval of St. Rose Hospital's Chief Financial Officer or designee. St. Rose Hospital must document the decision, including the reasons why the patient did not meet the regular criteria. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some situations that may qualify for Special Circumstances Charity Care:

- a. **Bankruptcy.** Patients who are in bankruptcy or recently completed bankruptcy.
- b. **Homeless Patients.** Emergency room patients without a payment source if they do not have a job, mailing address, residence or insurance.
- c. **Deceased.** Deceased patients without insurance, an estate, or third party coverage.
- d. **Medicare.** Income-eligible Medicare patients may apply for Financial Assistance for denied stays, denied days of care, and Medicare cost shares. Medicare patients who execute an ABN with respect to non-covered services shall not be eligible.
- e. **Medi-Cal.** Income-eligible Medi-Cal patients may apply for Financial Assistance for denied stays, denied days or care, and non-covered services; however, patients may not receive Financial Assistance for the Medi-Cal Share of Cost. Persons eligible for programs such as Medi-Cal but whose eligibility status is not established for the period during which the medical services were rendered may apply for Financial Assistance.**High Medical Cost Charity Care.** High Medical Cost Charity Care for Insured Patients ("High Medical Cost Charity Care") is a partial write-off of St. Rose Hospital's undiscounted charges for Covered Services. High Medical Cost Charity Care is not available for patients receiving services that are already discounted (e.g., package discounts). For Covered Services provided to patients who qualify for High Medical Cost Charity Care, St. Rose Hospital shall limit expected payments to an amount equal to twenty percent (20%) of the gross billed/undiscounted charges for the Covered Services provided to the patient less any payments made by the patient. This discount is available to insured patients who meet the following criteria:

**4.High Medical Cost Charity Care.** High Medical Cost Charity Care for Insured Patients ("High Medical Cost Charity Care") is a partial write-off of St. Rose Hospital's undiscounted charges for Covered Services. High Medical Cost Charity Care is not available for patients receiving services that are already discounted (e.g., package discounts). For Covered Services provided to patients who qualify for High Medical Cost Charity Care, St. Rose Hospital shall limit expected payments to an amount equal to twenty percent (20%) of the gross billed/undiscounted charges for the Covered Services provided to the patient less any payments

made by the patient. This discount is available to insured patients who meet the following criteria:

- A. 1. a. The patient's Family Income is less than 500 % of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (**Exhibit B**);
- b. The patient's or the patient's family medical expenses for Covered Services (incurred at St. Rose Hospital or paid to other providers in the past 12 months provided that the patient provides written evidence of payment to St. Rose Hospital) exceed the lesser of 10% of the patient's current Family Income and 10% of the patient's Family Income for the prior 12 months; and
- c. The patient's insurer has not provided a discount off the patient's bill (i.e., the patient is responsible to pay undiscounted charges).

**5. Payment Plans.** If a patient has a discounted balance due after qualifying for Partial Charity Care, Special Circumstances Charity Care, or High Medical Cost Charity Care, St. Rose Hospital will offer the patient an extended payment plan to allow payment of the discounted balance over time. St. Rose Hospital and the patient will negotiate the terms of the payment plan taking into consideration the patient's family income and essential living expenses. If St. Rose Hospital and the patient cannot agree on the payment plan, St. Rose will offer a reasonable payment plan with monthly payments that are not more than ten (10) percent of the patient's family income for a month deducting essential living expenses. "Essential living expenses" means for the purposes of determining a reasonable payment plan, expenses for any of the following: rent or house payment and maintenance, food and household supplies, utilities and telephone, clothing, medical and dental payments, insurance, school or childcare, child or spousal support, transportation and auto expenses, including insurance, gas, and repairs, installment payments, laundry and cleaning, and other extraordinary expenses.

#### A. Other Definitions

##### 1. Covered Services:

- a. Covered Services for Full Charity Care are all services that are required to be covered by a Knox-Keene licensed Health Care Services Plan, except that those services requiring administrative approval as defined below are not Covered Services.
- b. Covered Services for Partial Charity Care and High Medical Cost Charity Care are all services provided by St. Rose Hospital, except that those services requiring administrative approval as defined below are not Covered Services.
- c. Covered Services for the Uninsured Patient Discount and the Prompt Payment Discount are all services provided by St. Rose Hospital to Uninsured Patients.
- d. Services Requiring Prior Administrative Approval. Due to their unique nature, certain non-emergency services require administrative approval prior to admission and the provision of services. Generally, patients who seek complex, specialized, or high-cost services (e.g., experimental procedures, transplants) must receive administrative approval prior to the provision of services. Patients seeking to receive such services are not eligible for Full Charity Care, Partial Charity Care or High Medical Cost Charity Care unless St. Rose Hospital's executive team makes an exception.

2. **Uninsured Patient.** An Uninsured Patient is a patient who has no source of payment for any portion of their medical expenses including, without limitation, commercial or other insurance, government

sponsored healthcare benefit program or third party liability, or whose benefits under insurance have been exhausted prior to admission. Guidelines for determining when the Financial Assistance policy applies to Uninsured Patients under particular circumstances that arise during the ordinary course of business are set forth in **Exhibit A**.

3. **Primary Language of St. Rose Hospital's Service Area.** A language is a primary language of St. Rose Hospital's service area if 5% or more of St. Rose Hospital's local population speaks the language.
4. **Family Income.** Family Income is the lesser of 10% of the current family earnings for the annual family earnings from the prior 12 months or prior tax year as show by recent pay stubs or income tax returns, less payments made for alimony and child support. Proof of earnings may be determined by annualizing year-to-date family income, giving consideration for current earning rates. For patients over 18 years of age, the patient's family income includes their spouse or domestic partner as defined in Section 297 of the Family Code, and dependent children under 21 years of age, whether living at home or not. For patients under 18 years of age, the patient's family includes their parents, caretaker relatives, and other children under 21 years of age of the parents or caretaker relatives.

## PROCEDURES

### A. Applying for Financial Assistance:

1. An Uninsured Patient who indicates the financial inability to pay a bill for Covered Services shall be evaluated for Financial Assistance. In order to qualify as an Uninsured Patient, the patient or the patient's guarantor must verify that he or she is not aware of any right to insurance or government program benefits that would cover or discount the bill.
2. The "Statement of Financial Condition/Financial Assistance Application Form," **Exhibit C**, shall be used to document each patient's overall financial condition. This application shall be available in the Primary Language(s) for St. Rose Hospital's service area.
3. A sample of the "Charity Care Calculation Worksheet," **Exhibit D**, is provided to aid in the determination of the amount and type of charity care for which the patient may be eligible.

### B. Financial Assistance Determination and Notice

#### 1. Determination:

- a. St. Rose Hospital will consider each applicant's Financial Assistance application and grant Financial Assistance where the patient meets eligibility requirements and has received (or will receive) Covered Services.
- b. St. Rose Hospital may make Financial Assistance approval contingent upon a patient applying for governmental program assistance, which may be prudent if the particular patient requires ongoing services.
- c. In determining whether each individual qualifies for Financial Assistance, other county or governmental assistance programs should also be considered. Many applicants are not aware that they may be eligible for assistance such as Medi-Cal, Victims of Crime, or California Children Services.
- d. St. Rose Hospital should assist the individual in determining if they are eligible for any governmental or other assistance and provide applications as requested.
- e. Where administrative approval is required, St. Rose Hospital will consider the request for

service in a timely fashion and provide a response to the request in writing.

## 2. Notice

- a. While it is desirable to determine the amount of Financial Assistance for which a patient is eligible as close to the time of service as possible, there is no rigid limit on the time when the determination is made. In some cases, eligibility is readily apparent while in other cases further investigation is required to determine eligibility. In some cases, a patient eligible for Financial Assistance may not have been identified prior to initiating external collection action. St. Rose Hospital's collection agencies shall be made aware of this policy so that the agencies know to refer back to St. Rose Hospital patient accounts that may be eligible for Financial Assistance.
  - b. Once a Full or Partial Charity Care or High Medical Cost Charity Care determination has been made a "Notification Form" (**Exhibit E**) will be sent to each applicant advising them of the hospital's decision.
- C. **Dispute Resolution.** In the event of a dispute over the application of this policy, a patient may seek review by notifying St. Rose Hospital's Chief Financial Officer of the basis of any dispute and the desired relief. Written communication should be submitted within thirty (30) days of the patient's knowledge of the circumstances giving rise to the dispute. The Chief Financial Officer or designee shall review the concerns and inform the patient of any decision on writing.
- D. **Recordkeeping.** Records related to Financial Assistance must be readily accessible.
- E. **Third Party Liens.** St. Rose Hospital may lien the tort recoveries of Uninsured Patients in a manner consistent with applicable law.
- F. **Submission to OSHPD.** Beginning January 1, 2008 and every two years thereafter, St. Rose Hospital's will provide this policy and any amendments or modifications thereto to the Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development ("OSHPD") in a manner prescribed by OSHPD.
- G. **Submission to CDPH:** St. Rose Hospital will provide this policy and any amendments or modifications thereto to the California Department of Public Health in a manner described by the California Department of Public Health.

# COMMUNICATION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABILITY

## A. Information Provided to Patients

1. **Preadmission or Registration.** During preadmission or registration (or as soon thereafter as practicable and after stabilization of the patient's emergency medical condition in the case of emergency services), St. Rose Hospital shall provide:
  - a. All patients with information regarding the availability of Financial Assistance (Important Billing Information for Patients, **Exhibit F**).
  - b. Patients who the hospital identifies as uninsured with a Financial Assistance application (**Exhibit C**).
2. **Emergency Services.** In the case of emergency services, St. Rose Hospital shall provide the above information as soon as practicable after stabilization of the patient's emergency medical condition or upon discharge.
3. **All Other Times.** Upon request, St. Rose Hospital shall provide patients with information about their



right to request an estimate of their financial responsibility for services, the Statement of Financial Condition form, and/or Important Billing Information for Uninsured Patients.

**B. Postings and Other Notices.** Information about Financial Assistance shall also be provided as follows:

1. By posting in a visible manner in locations where there is a high volume of inpatient or outpatient admitting/registration, including, without limitation, the emergency department, billing offices, admitting office, and other hospital outpatient service settings including observation units.
2. By prominently posting information about Financial Assistance on St. Rose Hospital's website and including a link to the policy itself on St. Rose Hospitals website.
3. By including information about Financial Assistance in bills that are sent to Uninsured Patients. A sample that contains the required information is set forth on **Exhibit G**.
4. By including language on bills sent to Uninsured Patients as specifically set forth in **Exhibit H**.

**C. Applications.** St. Rose Hospital shall make applications for Medi-Cal, California Children's Services or any other potentially applicable governmental program readily available and accessible to Uninsured Patients and provide such applications upon request.

**D. Languages.** All notices/communications provided in this section shall be available in the Primary Language(s) of St. Rose Hospital's service area and in a manner consistent with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

## COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

**A. Assignment to Collection.** No patient debt shall be advanced/assigned to collection until the Director of Patient Financial Services or designee has reviewed the account and approved the advancement of the account to collection. If a patient is attempting to qualify for Financial Assistance and/or is attempting to settle an outstanding bill with St. Rose Hospital by negotiating a reasonable payment plan or making regular payments of a reasonable amount, St. Rose Hospital shall not send the unpaid bill to collection or a collection agency. Any extended payment plans shall be interest free. Before assigning any patient debt or bill to collections, St. Rose Hospital shall send the patient a notice with all of the following information: (1) the date or dates of service of the bill that is being assigned to collection; (2) the name of the entity that the bill is being assigned to; (3) a statement informing the patient how to obtain an itemized hospital bill from St. Rose Hospital; (4) the name and plan type of health coverage for the patient on record with St. Rose Hospital at the time of services or a statement that St. Rose Hospital does not have that information; (5) an application for St. Rose Hospital's charity care and financial assistance; and (6) the date or dates the patient was originally sent a notice about applying for financial assistance, the date or dates the patient was sent a financial assistance application and, if applicable, the date a decision on the application was made.

**B. Use of Collection Agencies.** St. Rose Hospital shall obtain an agreement from each collection agency that it utilizes to collect patient debt consistent with the requirements of this policy, federal law, and state law.

**C. Collection Methods.** St. Rose Hospital shall not initiate legal or judicial process, sell a patient's debt to another party, or report adverse information about the patient to consumer credit reporting agencies or credit bureaus before St. Rose Hospital has made reasonable efforts to determine whether the patient is eligible for Financial Assistance and in no case shall St. Rose Hospital or any collection agency utilized by St. Rose Hospital shall report adverse information to a consumer credit reporting agency or commence civil action against the patient for non-payment at any time prior to 180 days after the initial billing if the

patient is an Uninsured Patient or a patient provides information that he or she may qualify for Financial Assistance. The 180 day period shall be extended if the patient has a pending appeal for coverage for the services and the patient makes a reasonable effort to keep St. Rose Hospital informed of the progress of any appeals

## SELLING THE PATIENT DEBT

- A. 1. **Consideration for Sale.** No patient debt shall be considered for sale until the Director of Patient Financial Services or designee has reviewed the account and approved the consideration for sale. If a patient is attempting to qualify for Financial Assistance and/or is attempting to settle an outstanding bill with St. Rose Hospital by negotiating a reasonable payment plan or making regular payments of a reasonable amount, St. Rose Hospital shall not sale the patient debt.
2. **Conditions to Sale.** St. Rose Hospital shall not sell patient debt to a debt buyer, as defined in Section 1788.50 of the Civil Code, unless all of the following apply: (1) St. Rose Hospital has found the patient ineligible for financial assistance or the patient has not responded to any attempts to bill or offer financial assistance for 180 days; (2) the sales agreement with the debt buyer includes language under which the debt buyer agrees to return, and St. Rose Hospital agrees to accept, any account in which the balance has been determined to be incorrect due to the availability of a third-party payer, including a health plan or government health coverage program, or the patient is eligible for charity care or financial assistance; (3) the debt buyer agrees to not resell or otherwise transfer the patient debt, except to St. Rose Hospital or a tax-exempt organization described in Health & Safety Code § 127444, or if the debt buyer is sold or merged with another entity; (4) the debt buyer agrees not to charge interest or fees on the patient debt; and (5) the debt buyer is licensed as a debt collector by the Department of Financial Protection and Innovation.
3. **Actions Taken Before Sale.** Before selling any patient debt or bill to a debt buyer, St. Rose Hospital shall send the patient a notice with all of the following information: (1) the date or dates of service of the bill that is being sold; (2) the name of the entity that the bill is being sold to; (3) a statement informing the patient how to obtain an itemized hospital bill from St. Rose Hospital; (4) the name and plan type of health coverage for the patient on record with St. Rose Hospital at the time of services or a statement that St. Rose Hospital does not have that information; (5) an application for St. Rose Hospital's charity care and financial assistance; and (6) the date or dates the patient was originally sent a notice about applying for financial assistance, the date or dates the patient was sent a financial assistance application and, if applicable, the date a decision on the application was made.

## Attachments

[A: Guidelines for Application of Full and Partial Charity Care, Uninsured Patient Discount and Prompt Payment Discount](#)

[B. 2021 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

[C: Statement of Financial Condition/Financial Assistance Application](#)

[D: Charity Care Calculation Worksheet](#)

[E: Notification Form Eligibility for Charity Care](#)

[F: Important Billing Information for Patients at St. Rose Hospital](#)

[G: Notice of Rights](#)

[H: Notice Language on Bills for Uninsured Patients](#)



## Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Governing Board	Rosemarie Padua: Executive Assistant	02/2022
Medical Executive Committee	Elisabeth Reid-Gonzalez: Manager [RP]	02/2022
Leadership	Rosemarie Padua: Executive Assistant	02/2022
	Renee Frey: PFS Manager	02/2022