

Northwestern Mental Health Center, Inc. (NWMHC)		<i>Policy Name &amp; Number</i> <b>503</b> <i>Sliding Fee</i>	
Department: All		Author: Joan Tronson	
Original Approval Date 2010	Original Implementation Date 2010	Revision Date 11/14/14	
<b>Archive Information</b>			
Date:			
Reason:			

**I. PURPOSE**

As a provider of safety net services, the Center is committed to the essential safety and well-being of all persons experiencing mental health disorders regardless of ability to pay. Furthermore, as an Essential Community Provider and host of National Health Services Corps sponsored providers, the Center has a policy that no person will be denied services due to their inability to pay.

**II. POLICY**

It is the policy of NWMHC to provide mental health services to those in need of services regardless of the person's ability to pay. NWMHC offers a sliding fee scale based on poverty guidelines and applicable to individuals falling below 275% of poverty. Three categories of discounts apply ranging from a discount of 25% to a full 100% discount.

Eligibility:

- 1) Eligibility is based on Income and Family Size in comparison to the Federal Poverty Guidelines.
- 2) The client or parent/guardian must apply to receive the sliding fee discount on covered services.
  - a. Adolescents who qualify for "confidential" services (i.e. parents are not informed for qualifying clinical reasons) are exempt for the application requirement.
- 3) The sliding fee scale is the payment of last resort; the applicant must be willing to apply for all other applicable County Social Service or public health insurance for which they might be eligible. NWMHC staff may assist clients in the application process. Individual private insurance is also billed first where applicable (see note a.).
  - a. An individual has the right to pay for services directly without submission to privately held insurance.
  - b. If an individual chooses not to allow submission of a claim to insurance, for reasons of confidentiality or other reasons, he/she must either pay the full cost or apply to receive an income-based discount based on this policy.
- 4) The Chief Executive Officer may waive requirements 2 and 3 upon receipt of evidence that the person's mental illness is so severe that application for funding is not possible.

- 5) Persons who are in the care of residential or correctional facilities that are responsible for the overall healthcare of their residents are not eligible for the discounted fee. NWMHC will assist facility residents or incarcerated persons to secure funding for needed care.
- 6) Persons receiving a non-covered service should not be charged for care and are therefore not eligible to receive a sliding (discounted) fee.
- 7) Persons receiving court-mandated service are responsible for the full cost of service.

### **III. APPLICATION**

Policy applies to clients of NWMHC.

### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

#### Covered Services:

Covered services include all direct patient care services provided by the NWMHC for which fees are charged, with the exception of those services that require specific patient fee charges as mandated by the service funder/third party payer.

#### Non-Covered Services:

Services which are fully funded by grants, or third party revenues, will be provided to all eligible clients/patients/families without regard to income or family size unless specified by the grant.

#### Confidential Services:

For adolescents, services offered for which there is a clinical basis/rationale for not notifying parent/guardian.

For adults, this includes situations in which the client and the Center concur that it is in the best interest of the client to not invoice through shared health insurance (i.e. college students through parent's coverage; spouse seeking domestic violence counseling/support through a spousal/family insurance policy).

#### Sliding/Discounted Fee:

The sliding/discounted fee is the rate a patient pays for a covered service based on his/her ability to pay. Rates are determined based on the federal poverty guidelines and are updated accordingly. Within the scale a patient may be responsible for anywhere from 0% of the standard rate to 100% of the standard rate.

#### [Income Documentation](#)

**Need to fill in here**

### **V. STANDARDS**

Applies to clients of NWMHC.

### **VI. EXHIBITS**

EXHIBIT A: PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL OF DISCOUNTED SERVICE

**VII. REFERENCES**

<b>Reference:</b>	<b>Standard Numbers:</b>
NHSC site requirements	•
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**Procedure for Administration of the Sliding Fee Scale:**

**Step 1:**

A determination will be made whether the patient is in need of emergency mental health services. If so, the patient will be referred immediately to a mental health professional for further assessment. Planning for payment of services will occur as soon as feasible and appropriate upon stabilization of the emergency situation.

**Step 2:**

For routine care, at the time of patient registration/enrollment, the patient/guardian agrees to assume responsibility for the cost of care. Patient responsibility can be addressed by use of any public/private health care insurance or other coverage that may be available. Adult requests that fee for services not be billed to private insurance for reasons of confidentiality will be handled at this time.

**Step 3:**

If the patient does not have coverage, but has personal means to pay for his/her own (or dependent's) cost of care, arrangements for payment will be made at intake.

**Step 4:**

If the patient has neither coverage, nor the personal means to pay for his/her own (or dependent's) cost of care, the patient must apply for the sliding (discounted) fee and provide information to support eligibility for the reduced fee, including information on income and family size. Samples of documentation may include: pay stubs/verification from employers, evidence of SSI/SSDI, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Free or Reduced School Lunch Program or other documentation of income.

**Step 5:**

Based on income and family size documentation provided, staff will determine whether the person may be eligible for County funding or for publically funded health insurance and, if so, make a referral to the appropriate party.

**Step 6:**

Once all criteria for receipt of the sliding (discounted) fee are documented, and the individual is determined eligible, a payment plan (if payment is needed) will be established with the client (guardian)

**Additional:**

- Staff connects with clients on the sliding fee scale regularly to determine if the client has obtained another type of coverage.
- Clients are asked about any changes in insurance coverage regularly such that clients not initially on the sliding fee scale may use this service if their economic situation changes during the course of treatment.