

# Self-Declaration

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## Introduction

In order to provide access to services without regard for a person's ability to pay ([The Health Center Program statute: Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act \(42 USCS 254b\)](#)) requires Health Centers to establish policies and procedures to determine a patients' eligibility for the sliding fee discount, including acceptable income verification documents. Nevertheless, special populations such as agricultural workers, people experiencing homelessness, and recently settled groups face particular socio-economic barriers that make it difficult for them to produce the types of income verification documents that Health Centers typically require for sliding fee discount applications.

[Chapter 9: Sliding Fee Discount Program of the Health Center Compliance Manual](#) Version 2018, offers the following areas where health centers have discretion with respect to decision-making or that may be useful for health centers to consider when implementing sliding fee policies.

- “The health center determines whether to take into consideration the characteristics of its patient population when developing definitions for income and family size and procedures for assessing patient eligibility for SFDS. For example, the health center may consider the availability of income documentation for [individuals experiencing homelessness](#), build in cost of living considerations when calculating income, **permit self-declaration of income and family size**”

**Self-declaration** is a practical mechanism to document family income and family size for individual having difficulty to show other documents. Any alternative mechanism that is established must have a board-approved policy, a procedure, and must be available to all patients, regardless of income level, sliding fee scale pay class or population type.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:** *When establishing a self-declaration policy and procedure, please remember that:*

- Mobile populations such as agricultural workers, people experiencing homelessness, and recently settled groups may not have access to the documentation that your health center may require from clients in the more established population.
- Some agricultural workers and some day laborers are commonly paid in cash and are sometimes not paid for the work they do. Therefore, it is challenging for them to provide income verification documents such as pay stubs.
- Various housing arrangements make it impossible for members of those groups to produce documentation of rent and utility expenditures, for example:
  - Employers often discount the cost of housing and utilities from the workers' salaries without providing them with receipts.
  - Informal housing arrangements with extended family, friends, or other workers are common.
  - Some may be living in cars or in shelters.
- These groups seldom qualify for Medicaid, supplemental social security, and/or welfare.
- The Self Declaration Form is the most practical eligibility tool that Health Centers can use to assure that the administrative process of determining eligibility for the sliding fee discount is culturally appropriate and does not present a barrier to care.