

# SLIDING FEE SCALE

## INTRODUCTION

Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 USCS 254b) requires Community/Migrant Health Centers to:

- Prepare a schedule of fees for the provision of their services that is consistent with locally prevailing rates.
- Prepare a corresponding schedule of discounts (or sliding fee scale), to be applied to the payment of such fees in which discounts are adjusted on the basis of the patient's ability to pay.
- Provide full discount to individuals and families with annual income at or below those set forth in the most recent Community Services Administration (CSA) Poverty Income Guidelines (except that nominal fees for service may be collected from individuals and families with annual incomes at or below the poverty guidance).
- Provide no discount to individuals and families with an annual income over 200 percent of the Federal Poverty level.

The Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) provides further guidance in Policy Information Notice 98-23: Health Center Program Expectations, which states that Community and Migrant Health Centers must:

- Provide access to services without regard for a person's ability to pay.
- Develop a policy and procedure to determine eligibility for patient discounts that is adjusted on the basis of the patient's ability to pay.
- Provide a full discount to individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 100% of the poverty guidelines --although the center can charge a nominal fee.
- Charge those with incomes between 100 percent and at 200 percent of poverty fees in accordance with a sliding discount policy based on family size and income. Refer to the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)
- Provide no discounts to patients with incomes over 200 percent of the Federal poverty level (Refer to guide for determining sliding scale).

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

When establishing your sliding fee scale policy and procedure, please remember that:

- Mobile populations such as migratory or recently settled seasonal agricultural workers may not have access to the documentation that your health center may require for clients in the more established population.
- Some farmworkers and other day laborers are commonly paid in cash and are sometimes not paid for the work they do. Therefore, it is very challenging for them to provide income verification documents such as pay stubs.
- Farmworkers work on a seasonal basis and they are paid either by contract or by piece work. The availability of work depends on the weather and economic forces including the demand for the product, and the price of the produce in the market.
- The median family income for a farmworker household is between \$7,500 and \$10,000.
- Farmworkers are generally employed in agriculture during the agricultural season.
- When there is no employment in agriculture, farmworkers may seek any kind of temporary employment such as landscaping, construction, meat processing, etc.