



Board Training Discussion Guide: Sliding Fee Discount Program – Tips for Health Center Boards

Purpose

The Board Discussion Guide is designed as an opportunity for participants to expand on what they learned in the e-learning module, Tips for Health Center Boards for Evaluating the Sliding Fee Discount Program. The discussion guide can assist facilitators in engaging board members in dialogue after they have viewed the module. Keep in mind that sharing takeaways with others is a key method to remember what is learned and inspire new ideas.

Let's Get Started!

As you begin, be mindful of time and be sure to know everyone's name and title. Facilitators should remind board members that there is always more to learn about nonprofit governance and encourage participants to ask questions at any point. If conducting a virtual training, consider using polls or the chat feature to gather feedback and engage your audience. If questions have been submitted ahead of time, use them as conversation starters or include them in the appropriate topic areas. As you go through the discussion guide, confirm that the questions have been addressed before going to the next question. Lastly, write down any follow-up questions that may be asked.

To kick off discussion, invite members to share a one-two minute reaction to the e-learning module.

- What do you think about your role in overseeing the Sliding Fee Discount Program (SFDP)?
- What are the concepts you identified in the module that you feel confident in applying?
- What concepts do you find challenging and may need help with?

Discussion

After initial reactions are shared, acknowledge everyone's comments, and highlight topics from the module that participants mentioned. Remind participants that the board plays a very important role in evaluating the SFDP. Then process what was learned in the module using the following questions to prompt participant feedback:

Module Introduction

The SFDP is a key [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#) requirement for health centers. In the mission of health centers, the SFDP is designed to ensure access to care. Health center boards are required to adopt, review, and evaluate the SFDP.

- How would you define or describe the SFDP?
- Why does the health center have a SFDP? How does it impact patients?
- When was the last time the board reviewed or discussed the SFDP?

HRSA Compliance

[Chapter 9, Demonstrating Compliance Part L of the HRSA Health Center Compliance Manual](#) provides the minimum requirements for evaluating the SFDP. Remember these basic steps: the board must review the SFDP at least **once every three years, reviewing required utilization data and adopting changes as needed.**



The health center is required by HRSA to collect and analyze how many patients use the SFDP, so this data will be prepared by staff for the board to review. You may wish to briefly review Chapter 9, Part L as a group.

As a board, discuss the following:

- How often does your board review and discuss the SFDP?
- Describe in your own words the board's responsibility when it comes to the SFDP.
- What data does your board review to stay in compliance and how often is this reviewed?

Utilization Data

Health center staff should prepare different types of data reports for the board. As stated previously these reports, known as utilization data, show how patients are using the SFDP. The module recommends that staff prepare an analysis of the data about these three groups: patients using the discount at 100% or below of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG), patients using the discount at the 3 or more levels required between 100% and 200% of FPG, and patients using the discount for each service offered by the health center (medical, dental, behavior health, etc.).

As a group, answer these questions to check your understanding of utilization data used to evaluate the SFDP. Responses are included for each question.

- **How is utilization data typically presented to your board for review? Has this been something the board has reviewed or discussed in detail?** Some health centers have a committee that reviews the data on a routine basis to build board member familiarity. Other health centers ensure that staff is on hand to describe the data, to help board members understand it, and to respond to questions.
- **What do data comparisons reveal to the board?** Data comparisons show patient utilization across service categories. It is important to keep in mind that if patient utilization data is not even, adjustments may be needed to the schedule of discounts to remove any barriers to care.
- **If patients do not use the SFDP very much for medical services, but they use it a lot for dental services, what questions would you want to ask about the medical utilization rates?** If a health center has different scales for different service types, a board can consider reviewing these separately and during different meetings to avoid confusion.

Other Types of Data

The board will likely review other types of data when evaluating the SFDP, to gain additional information and consider changes to the program. This data may include results from satisfaction surveys, focus groups, surveys by income group and input from patient advisory committee groups. This section includes a recommendation that members should be aware of key patient survey questions that can be used, regarding missing or cancelling appointments due to cost. Boards should also evaluate how well the SFDP is being accessed by patients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

- **What other types of data does your board ask for in reviewing the SFDP?** A health center should also analyze and present a summary of other types of data for board consideration, including results of patient satisfaction surveys or focus groups, surveys of patients at various income levels, and input from patient advisory groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in reducing financial barriers to care.



- **How does the board use data effectively to evaluate the SFDP?** Data presented to board members should show the performance of the SFDP and help the board evaluate how the organization includes patients who have limited English proficiency in the program implementation. Give examples.
- **What other questions or suggestions do you have about the other types of data that your board reviews?**

Oversight Questions for Board Member Discussion

Be sure that the group has considered their responsibility to ask questions during board work on the SFDP. Important questions that board members can ask during the review and evaluation of the SFDP are listed below. As a group, go through these questions and discuss if any of the topics have been an issue during recent board meetings on the SFDP.

- Does the board have the right data to make informed decisions about the SFDP?
- Is the program being used at all levels, including by patients at or below 100% FPG?
- If the center is waiving all fees for patients at or below the FPG, does the data suggest they should continue that approach? Or should there be a change to the nominal fee to reduce financial barriers?

Identifying and Implementing Changes to SFDP as Needed

After receiving utilization data, other data and asking questions, the next step will be to identify and implement changes. As the board evaluates the information provided, changes to the SFDP may result in improved implementation of the eligibility screening process, policies regarding patient notification of the program, or even a change in what patients pay for each of the discount pay classes. Remember, any change should be discussed as a board, approved by the board, and documented in the board meeting minutes.

- What kinds of changes has your board made to its SFDP? Has the board, for example, changed the process for determining eligibility, or changed the discount rates?
- Are you satisfied with how well your board ensures follow up for changes to the SFDP?

Act

As a whole group, use this time to invite participants to share what they learned from the conversation – new insights, “aha” moments, more questions to consider. This is a good moment for members to share their takeaways and connect with one another.

- As a collective board, what are 1-2 things you can do now that will help you provide better oversight of the SFDP?
- Any takeaways from this discussion or module?



NCFH

National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.

Resources

Board authority for oversight of Sliding Fee Discount Program are integrated within the [Health Center Program Compliance Manual](#) and the [Health Center Program Site Visit Protocol](#).

Access the Health Center Program Compliance Manual here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/hc-compliance-manual.pdf>

Access the Health Center Program Compliance Manual in Spanish here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/health-center-manual-spanish.pdf>

Access the Health Center Program Site Visit Protocol here:

- <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/programrequirements/pdf/site-visit-protocol.pdf>

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