

Victoria County Public Health Department Charity Care / Financial Assistance Policy

Purpose

The Victoria County Public Health Department (VCPHD) is committed to providing quality public health services to all community members. VCPHD attempts to ensure that financial limitations do not prevent individuals from seeking or receiving medically necessary public health services. In line with federal and state laws, VCPHD provides financial assistance to eligible individuals through a structured and equitable Charity Care program.

Scope

This policy applies to participating programs, services, and clinics operated by the Victoria County Public Health Department. VCPHD does not provide emergency medical care and refers such cases to appropriate local facilities. VCPHD complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or sex.

Definitions

- **Charity Care:** Services provided at no cost or reduced cost to eligible clients who meet financial criteria, without expectation of standard payment.
- **Client:** Any person who is receiving or requesting services provided by the Victoria County Public Health Department
- **Eligibility criteria:** The financial criteria shall include income levels indexed to the federal poverty guidelines. These criteria do not set the income level for financial assistance lower than that required by Texas counties under Section 61.023 of the Indigent Health Care & Treatment Act, or, in the case of the Financially Indigent, more than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. The federal poverty guidelines are published in the Federal Register each year in February. These guidelines will become effective for this financial assistance policy on the first day of the month following publication. The guidelines published by the Texas Department of Health Services are found on their website.
- **Emergency Care:** VCPHD does not provide emergency care; however, definitions align with Section 1867 of the Social Security Act.
- **Family:** Using the Census Bureau definition, a group of two or more people who reside together and are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. According to Internal Revenue Service rules, if the patient claims someone as a dependent on their income tax return, they may be considered a dependent for the provision of financial assistance.

- **Family Income:** Family Income is determined using the Census Bureau definition, which uses the following income when computing federal poverty guidelines:
 - Includes earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates, trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, assistance from outside the household, and other miscellaneous sources;
 - Excludes noncash benefits (such as food stamps and housing subsidies);
 - Determined on a before-tax basis;
 - Excludes capital gains or losses; and
 - Includes the income of all family members who live together (Non-relatives, such as housemates, do not count).
- **Federal Poverty Level (FPL):** Income thresholds updated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Gross charges:** The total charges at the organization's full established rates for the provision of patient care services before deductions from revenue are applied.
- **Medically necessary:** As defined by Medicare (services or items reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury).
- **Public Health Services:** Services designed to protect and promote the general population's health and to prevent higher-cost interventions such as hospitalizations. These services include but are not limited to tuberculosis identification, diagnosis, and treatment; sexually transmitted disease identification, diagnosis, and treatment; immunization (clinical services and administration); and chronic disease screening, monitoring, and self-management.
- **Underinsured:** The patient has some level of insurance or third-party assistance but still has out-of-pocket expenses that exceed their financial abilities.
- **Uninsured:** No active insurance or third-party payment source.

Eligibility Criteria

Patients and clients demonstrating their inability to pay will not be denied services and will be provided with a waiver of fees. Financial assistance is available to clients who meet all of the following conditions:

- **Texas Residency:** Must be a current resident of Texas.
- **Underinsured Status:** The patient has some level of insurance or third-party assistance but still has out-of-pocket expenses that exceed their financial abilities; or,
- **Uninsured Status:** No third-party coverage (e.g., Medicaid, private insurance).
- **Income Threshold:** Household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); or,
- **Presumptive Financial Assistance Eligibility.**

Charity Care Determination:	
Household Family Size:	Criteria: (200% Federal Poverty Level)
1	\$31,300
2	\$42,300
3	\$53,300
4	\$64,300
5	\$75,300
6	\$86,300
7	\$97,300
8	\$108,300
For Families / households with more than 8 persons, add \$11,000 for each additional member.	

Presumptive Financial Assistance Eligibility

If there is insufficient documentation to support a patient's eligibility for charity care, VCPHD may use other qualifying conditions to determine the estimated income and potential eligibility for charity care. An uninsured or underinsured client may be eligible for a discount from billed amounts for VCPHD services if he or she meets one or more of the following conditions on the date of service, unless otherwise indicated:

- State-funded prescription programs;
- Homeless or received care from a homeless clinic;
- Participation in Women, Infants, and Children programs (WIC);
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Benefits;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility;
- Subsidized school lunch program eligibility;
- Eligibility for other state or local assistance programs
- Low-income/subsidized housing is provided as a valid address; and
- Patient is deceased with no known estate.

Applications may be obtained:

1. Online at www.VCPHD.org
2. Onsite at VCPHD
3. By requesting a copy via U.S mail at the following address:
 - Victoria County Public Health Department
 - 2805 N. Navarro
 - Victoria, TX 77901

Appeals, complaints, and requests for assistance should be addressed using the contact information provided above.

Application Process

Applicants must submit:

- A completed VCPHD Charity Care Application.
- Proof of household income.
- Proof of Texas residency.

All documentation must be submitted prior to the provision of services. Incomplete applications may not be considered.

Communication of Policy

Notification of VCPHD's Financial Assistance Program shall be made available through posted notices in VCPHD's registration areas, clinics, waiting areas, and on the VCPHD webpage. In addition, written notice shall be provided to potentially eligible clients during the registration process, the billing process, or as soon as possible thereafter. This information will be provided in both English and Spanish, and translated for clients/guarantors who speak languages other than English.

Collection Practices

VCPHD will not engage in aggressive collection actions such as:

- Wage garnishments
- Property liens
- Body attachments

Regulatory Compliance

VCPHD follows all applicable local, state, and federal laws, including:

- Section 355.8212 of the Texas Administrative Code
- Section 61.023 of the Texas Indigent Health Care & Treatment Act
- IRS Section 501(r) requirements (if applicable)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Participating Providers

All providers employed by the Victoria County Public Health Department in the following units are covered under this policy:

- Nursing
- Community Engagement

Services provided under this policy are limited to the following:

- Immunizations
- Sexually Transmitted Illness Services
- Tuberculosis Services
- Disease Prevention and Management

Appeals and Inquiries

Questions, appeals, or complaints regarding financial assistance decisions should be directed to:

Victoria County Public Health Department
2805 N. Navarro
Victoria, TX 77901
361-578-6281

by:



Ben Zeller – County Judge, Victoria County

2-2-2026

Effective Date



David Gonzales – Director, Victoria County Public Health Department

2/2/26

Effective Date