



A Closer Look

Serving the Indigent: A Unique Approach to Caring for the Poor

Key Points:

- Most major metropolitan areas in the U.S. have passed a special tax for care of the indigent, or establish public charity hospitals; Franklin County has neither.
- Franklin County hospitals follow the same inclusive guidelines when providing free and significantly discounted care to the indigent.
- This approach is unique to central Ohio.

Hospitals Share Responsibility for Serving the Indigent

In Franklin County, all residents -- regardless of economic status -- receive the same quality of care at the community's acute care hospitals. Our "equal access" healthcare system is vital to our sense of community in central Ohio. And it is unique: In no other community in the country have hospitals agreed to follow the same inclusive guidelines when providing free and significantly discounted care to the indigent.

The result is that Central Ohio escapes the fate of other communities, which either must pass a special tax for care of the indigent, or establish public charity hospitals where care is crowded and divides the community along economic lines.

Hospital leaders recently reaffirmed their commitment to an equal access system by adopting a uniform charity care policy. Our hospitals provide free, medically necessary hospital care for Ohio residents with family incomes under 200 percent of the federal poverty income limits (FPL). Hospitals also provide significant discounts on medically necessary hospital care for patients with family incomes up to 400 percent of FPL.

Franklin County Hospital Uniform Charity Care Policy		
Persons in Family	Free Care	Significantly Discounted Care
4	\$44,700	\$89,400

Hospitals Adopt Community Guidelines on Patient Financial Assistance, Billing Practices

Franklin County hospital leaders have adopted common guidelines which all hospitals currently follow when working with patients on financial assistance needs. The principles were adopted by the Board of Directors of the Central Ohio Hospital Council in October 2009, and focus on informing patients, including those with language barriers, on the availability of

financial assistance and how best to work with hospital in applying.

General principles to the guidelines include:

- Fear of a hospital bill should not deter anyone from seeking medically necessary care in a Franklin County hospital.
- All patients will be treated with

dignity, compassion and respect and in a culturally appropriate manner.

- All patients will receive the same high quality of care regardless of their race, religion, sex, national origin, disability, familial status or ability to pay for health care services.



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