



HOSPITAL FIELD SUPPORTS BILLING AND COLLECTION GUIDELINES THAT TREAT PATIENTS WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

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The mission of every hospital in America is to serve the health care needs of people in its community – part of that commitment includes treating patients with dignity and respect from the bedside to the billing office. In 2003, the hospital field adopted voluntary principles and guidelines on billing and collections, which incorporate patient-friendly billing practices. Those guidelines address effective communications, financial assistance for those in financial need, applying policies accurately and consistently, making care more affordable for those in need and ensuring fair practices.

The billing and collection guidelines were recently updated [*see attachment*] because several of its original tenets were incorporated into law at the same time the promise of health insurance coverage was extended to 32 million Americans. The updated guidelines also are a reminder that hospitals and patients are partners who share responsibility for addressing billing issues in a timely, transparent and forthright manner.

The voluntary principles and guidelines underscore hospitals' commitment to their communities and to ensure conversations about financial obligations don't impede care. They also are crafted to reflect the hospital field's immense diversity. Hospitals will need to adapt these guidelines to the needs and expectations of their particular communities. Hospitals also will need to adapt the guidelines to conform with state and local requirements.

The policies and guidelines reflect hospitals' commitment to their communities and to their mission of caring.