



East Coast Mental Wellness Business Office Policy

SUBJECT: **Sliding-Scale Fee Discount Policy**

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2018

POLICY: To make services available to all in need.

PURPOSE:

This program is designed to provide free or discounted care to those who have no means, or limited means, to pay for their mental health services (uninsured or underinsured). In addition to quality mental healthcare, clients are entitled to financial counseling by someone who can understand and offer possible solutions for those who cannot pay in full. The Patient Account Representative's role is that of client advocate, that is, one who works with the client and/or guarantor to find reasonable payment alternatives.

East Coast Mental Wellness will offer a Sliding Fee Discount Program to all who are unable to pay for their services. East Coast Mental Wellness will base program eligibility on a person's ability to pay and will not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, disability, or national origin. The Federal Poverty Guidelines are used in creating and annually updating the sliding fee schedule (SFS) to determine eligibility.

PROCEDURE: The following guidelines are to be followed in providing the Sliding Fee Discount Program.

1. **Notification:** East Coast Mental Wellness will notify clients of the Sliding Fee Discount Program by:

- Signage notifying clients of the available discount program will be displayed in the waiting rooms.
- Client will be informed of the available program by the Intake Coordinator upon scheduling an appointment.
- Sliding Fee Discount Program application will be included with collection notices sent out by East Coast Mental Wellness.
- An explanation of our Sliding Fee Discount Program and the application forms will be emailed to clients in addition to the required intake documentation.
- Notification of our available Sliding Fee Discount Program, along with an explanation will be available on the East Coast Mental Wellness website.

2. All clients seeking mental health services at East Coast Mental Wellness are assured that they will be served regardless of ability to pay. **No one is refused services because of lack of financial means to pay.**

3. **Request for discount:** Requests for discounted services may be made by clients, family members, social services staff or others who are aware of existing financial hardship. The Sliding Fee Discount program will only be made available for in-office visits.



4. **Administration:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program will be administered through the Intake Coordinator or his/her designee. Information about the Sliding Fee Discount Program policy and procedure will be provided, and assistance offered for completion of the application. Dignity and confidentiality will be respected for all who seek and/or are provided with charitable services.

5. **Alternative payment sources:** All alternative payment resources must be exhausted, including all third-party payment from insurance(s), federal, and state programs.

6. **Completion of application:** The client/ responsible party must complete the Sliding Fee Discount Program application in its entirety. By signing the Sliding Fee Discount Program application, individuals authorize East Coast Mental Wellness to confirm income as disclosed on the application form. Providing false information on a Sliding Fee Discount Program application will result in all Sliding Fee Discount Program discounts being revoke and the full balance of the account(s) restored and payable immediately.

7. **Eligibility:** Discounts will be based on income and family size only. East Coast Mental Wellness uses the Census Bureau definitions of each.

a. **Family** is defined as: a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members are considered members of one family.

b. **Income** 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. *Noncash benefits (such as SNAP and housing subsidies) do not count.*

8. **Income verification:** Applicants must provide one of the following: prior year W-2, two most recent pay stubs, letter from employer, or Form 4506-T (if W-2 not filed). Self-employed individuals will be required to submit detail of the most recent three months of income and expenses for the business. Adequate information must be made available to determine eligibility for the program. **Self-declaration of Income** may only be used in special circumstances. Specific examples include participants who are homeless. Client who are unable to provide written verification must provide a signed statement of income, and why he/she is unable to provide independent verification. Self-declared clients will be responsible for 100% of their charges until management determines the appropriate category.

9. **Discounts:** Those with incomes at or below 100% poverty will receive a 100% discount. Those with incomes about 100% poverty, but at or below 200% of poverty, will be charges according to the attached sliding fee schedule. The sliding fee schedule will be update during the first quarter of every calendar year with the latest Federal Poverty Guidelines.

10. **Nominal Fee:** Clients receiving a full discount will be assessed a \$20 nominal charge per visit. However, clients will not be denied services due to an inability to pay. The nominal fee is not a threshold for receiving care and thus, is not a minimum fee or co-payment.



11. Waiving of Charges: In certain situations, clients may not be able to pay the nominal or discount fee. Waiving of charges may only be used in special circumstances and must be approved by East Coast Mental Wellness's administration.

12. Applicant notification: The Sliding Fee Discount Program determination will be provided to the applicant(s) in writing via email and/or standard mail and will include the percentage of Sliding Fee Discount Program write off, or, if applicable, the reason for denial. If the application is approved for less than a 100% discount or denied, the client and/or responsible party must immediately establish payment arrangements with East Coast Mental Wellness. Sliding Fee Discount program applications cover the outstanding client balances for three months prior to the application date and any balances incurred within 12 months after the approved date, unless their financial situation changes significantly. The client has the option to reapply after the 12 months have expired or anytime there has been a significant change in family income. When the applicant reapplies, the look back period will be the lesser of three months or the expiration of their last Sliding Fee Discount Program Application.

13. Refusal to pay: If a client verbally expresses an unwillingness to pay or vacates the premises without paying for services, the client will be contacted in writing regarding their payment obligations. If the client is not on the sliding fee schedule, a copy of the sliding fee discount program application will be sent with the notice. If the client does not make any effort to pay or fails to respond within 60 days, this constitutes refusal to pay. At this point, East Coast Mental Wellness can explore options not limited, but including offering the client a payment plan, waiving of charges in special circumstances, or referring client's account to begin collection efforts.

14. Record keeping: Information related to Sliding Fee Discount Program decisions will be maintained and preserved in a centralized confidential file located in the administration office, to preserve the dignity of those receiving free or discounted services.

a. Applicants that have been approved for the Sliding Fee Discount Program will be logged in a password protected document maintained by the East Coast Mental Wellness administration, noting names of applicants, dates of coverage, and percentage of coverage.

b. Additionally, administration will maintain a monthly log identifying Sliding Fee Discount Program recipients and dollar amounts. Denials will also be logged.

15. Policy and procedure review: Annually, the amount of Sliding Fee Discount Program provided will be reviewed the East Coast Mental Wellness administration. The SFS will be updated based on the current Federal Poverty Guidelines. This will also serve as a discussion base for reviewing possible changes in our policy and procedures and for examining institutional practices which may serve as barriers preventing eligible clients from accessing our services.

ATTACHMENTS:

2018 Sliding Fee Schedule

Client application for the Sliding Fee Discount Program

