

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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### **Office of the Health Care Advocate FY2022 Hospital Budget Guidance Questions**

#### **1. Hospital Financial Assistance and Bad Debt during COVID-19**

- a. Please provide the following updates since last year's hospital budget process:
  - i. How have you changed your official or unofficial patient financial assistance policies and/or procedures?
  - ii. How has your handling of patient collections changed?
  - iii. Please estimate the most recent quarter when you reviewed whether your free care policy documents (full policy, plain language summary, application, etc.) align.
- b. Collecting on patient debt:
  - i. If a patient is overcharged, please explain your ability to correct a bill once the collection process has begun.
  - ii. Do you inform patients when patient balances owed are written off as bad debt?
  - iii. How many patients had bills that you sent to a third party to collect the debt during the following timespans: (1) Q4 FY2020 and Q1-Q3 FY2021 and (2) Q4 FY2021 and Q1-Q3 FY2022?
  - iv. What is the total dollar amount of bills sent to collections during the following timespans: (1) Q4 FY2020 and Q1-Q3 FY2021 and (2) Q4 FY2021 and Q1-Q3 FY2022?
- c. Please provide the FY2021 actual and FY2022 projected bad debt by whether the patient who accrued the debt was insured or uninsured. Please split the insured category by whether the patient's primary insurance is Medicaid, Medicare, or a commercial plan.

#### **2. Medicaid Screening Processes**

- a. Emergency Medicaid
  - i. If your organization has written policies regarding screening for emergency Medicaid under HBEE Rule 1702(d),<sup>1</sup> please provide them.
  - ii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2022, please provide the number of facility patients screened for emergency Medicaid and the number of facility patients who received emergency Medicaid.
  - iii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2022, please provide the number of labor and delivery patients screened for emergency Medicaid and the number of labor and delivery patients who were covered by emergency Medicaid.
  - iv. If your organization has outreach materials on the application process and eligibility criteria for Emergency Medicaid, please provide them. Please explain how your patients can access these materials and list the languages into which the materials have been translated.
- b. Deemed Newborns<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ["Health Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment Rules."](#) *State of Vermont*. 2021.

- i. If your organization has written policies regarding screening newborns for Medicaid in line with HBEE rule 9.03(b), please provide them.
- ii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2022, please provide the number of newborns screened for Medicaid without an application and the number of those newborns who received Medicaid.
- c. Since the passage of “H. 430/Act No. 48 An act relating to eligibility for Dr. Dynasaur-like coverage for all income-eligible children and pregnant individuals regardless of immigration status,”<sup>3</sup> what steps have you taken to prepare for the implementation? Do you have outreach materials, and if so, what languages are they translated into? If you have such materials, please provide them.

### **3. Health Equity**

- a. Please provide examples of any policies, procedures, and initiatives that your hospital has undertaken, or plans to undertake, to address systemic racism within your institution and community.
- b. If you have a funded DEI / Racial Equity position or DEI committee at the hospital, what are their primary roles and responsibilities? How is this position empowered and supported within the hospital? If you do not have this type of position, are you planning to create one? What obstacles are preventing you from creating this type of position?
- c. Please describe the process for how your hospital handles patient complaints related to discrimination.
- d. How much funding in your current and future budgets has been allocated to DEI and/or racial equity focused projects, trainings, or collaborations?
- e. What percentage of staff and administrative leadership have received training in language access needs, implicit bias, and cultural competency? Does this vary significantly by job category?
- f. Are patient satisfaction surveys given in languages other than English? In what languages is the survey available? Is race/ethnicity data collected as a part of these surveys?
- g. Please discuss any analyses or tracking your hospital conducts or is considering conducting regarding access to care, care efficacy, or satisfaction among vulnerable populations including, *but not limited to*,
  - i. patients whose primary language is not English,
  - ii. BIPOC patients,
  - iii. patients with no or intermittent broadband and/or cellular telephone service, and
  - iv. patients who are not U.S. citizens.
- h. Discuss how you utilize health disparities data to inform hospital policies and procedures.

### **4. Contingency Planning**

- a. Please provide a high-level contingency plan detailing how your hospital would amend its business strategy if the Board reduced or denied your charge request.

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<sup>2</sup> Deemed newborns are children who were born to a Medicaid recipient. In accordance with 42 C.F.R. § 435.117 and HBEE 9.03 (b) (2) (i), these individuals are automatically enrolled in Medicaid without an additional application.

<sup>3</sup>[“Act No. 48 – As Enacted.”](#) 2021.