

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

264 NORTH WINOOSKI AVE. - P.O. BOX 1367

BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05402

(800) 917-7787 (TOLL FREE HOTLINE)

(802) 863-7152 (FAX)

OFFICES:

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### 1. Reimbursement Ratio Relative to Standardized Medicare Reimbursement<sup>1</sup>

Please complete the table below regarding actual reimbursement rate relative to Medicare reimbursement rate by payer category for FY2021 (Q1-Q3). **This does not apply to Springfield since it is a Critical Access Hospital and not how Springfield is reimbursed. We do not track DRG's or APC's for Medicare patients.**

	Ratio of Inpatient Reimbursement to Medicare Inpatient Reimbursement, Standardized by MS-DRG Relative Weights	Ratio of Outpatient Reimbursement to Medicare Outpatient Reimbursement, Standardized by APC Relative Weights
Medicare	1	1
Medicaid		
Commercial		

To the extent that your organization tracks the information by commercial payer, please complete the table below for FY 2021 (Q1-Q3).<sup>2</sup>

	Ratio of Inpatient Reimbursement to Medicare Inpatient Reimbursement, Standardized by MS-DRG Relative Weights	Ratio of Outpatient Reimbursement to Medicare Outpatient Reimbursement, Standardized by APC Relative Weights
BCBSVT		
TVHP		
MVP		
Cigna		

(continued)

<sup>1</sup> The HCA has agreed to consider minor adjustments to the data requests in this question. Any updates will be provided to the hospitals as soon as possible and no later than May 1, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> In light of CMS mandates requiring hospitals to publicly disclose prices by commercial payer, we do not expect that commercial payer contracts limit such disclosure.

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

- a. In our questions posed during last year's hospital budget guidance, the HCA asked you to report changes related to financial assistance and collections as a result of Covid-19. *Please provide the following updates from the time of your response in last year's hospital budget process:*
  - i. How have you changed your official or unofficial patient financial assistance policies and/or procedures? **There were no official changes to our financial assistance policy.**
  - ii. How has your handling of patient collections changed? **Our patient collections procedure remain the same.**
- b. Do you work with collection agencies? If yes: **Yes, we work with Wakefield & Associates as our collection agency.**
  - i. Do you sell patient debt to collection agencies? If you do not sell patient debt to collection agencies, please explain how you work collection agencies to collect patient debt. **Outstanding patient accounts are transferred to the collection agency at 121 days.**
  - ii. If a patient is overcharged, please explain your ability to correct a bill once the collection agency is involved. **We would consult with the collection agency to have the account corrected.**
  - iii. How many patients had bills that you sent to collection agencies during the following timespans: (1) Q4 FY2019 and Q1-Q3 FY2020 and (2) Q4 FY2020 and Q1-Q3 FY2021? **See table below.**
  - iv. What is the total dollar amount of bills sent to collection agencies during the following timespans: (1) Q4 FY2019 and Q1-Q3 FY2020 and (2) Q4 FY2020 and Q1-Q3 FY2021? **See table below.**

Time Period	Patients	Amount	Date Range	
Q4 FY2019	1383	\$ 1,492,328.39	7/1/2019	9/30/2019
Q1-Q3 FY2020	2798	\$ 3,121,448.21	10/1/2019	6/30/2020
Q4 FY2020	1478	\$ 1,404,848.18	7/1/2020	9/30/2020
Q1-Q3 FY2021	2104	\$ 2,067,740.47	10/1/2020	6/30/2021

v.

## 3. Medicaid Screening Processes

- a. Emergency Medicaid
  - i. If your organization has written policies regarding screening for emergency Medicaid, please provide them. **Our Financial Assistance Policy defines how we communicate availability of assistance to all patients and is available via registration welcome packets, web, brochures at every entry. If a patient is identified as having no insurance, outreach counselors offer assistance. If a patient is admitted through the ED to inpatient, registration notifies the patient.**
  - ii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2021, please provide the number of facility patients

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screened for emergency Medicaid and the number of facility patients who received emergency Medicaid.

968 VT patients were screened for Medicaid and other insurance programs from 10/1/2020 to 06/30/2021. Of those 968 patients, after initial screening, 49 completed Medicaid applications. We provided 445 follow up services with Medicaid enrollment, Access to Care, addition of household members, and/or income updates. 44 of these patients were over-income for Medicaid, but were assisted with BCBS/MVP enrollment. We provided 543 follow up services to patients related to SEP's, transition to the plan, plan start dates, PDSR assistance, and/or plan enrollment explanations. In addition, we provided 517 general information calls to these patients regarding program enrollment in VT Health Connect programs and their eligibility, coverage questions and explanations of how Cost Sharing Reductions might help them access care.

During this period, there were far less Medicaid apps than normal because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. People who were on MAGI Medicaid at the time the public health emergency was declared, regardless of income, are allowed to stay on Medicaid until the federal public health emergency has ended. Normally we would be assisting people with their reviews and possibly transition from Medicaid if they were over income.

- iii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2021, please provide the number of labor and delivery patients screened for Medicaid and the number of labor and delivery patients who were covered by emergency Medicaid. **Not applicable**
- iv. If your organization has outreach materials on the application process and eligibility criteria Emergency Medicaid, please provide them. Please explain how your patients can access these materials and list the languages that the materials have been translated into.

Our financial assistance policy and applications are available at every point of entry at Springfield Hospital, through physician offices, and are also available for download on our website. The printed materials are available in English. Our language translation line is available to assist as needed.

<https://springfieldhospital.org/financial-assistance-from-springfield-hospital/>

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- b. Deemed Newborns<sup>3</sup>
  - i. If your organization has written policies regarding screening newborns for Medicaid, please provide them.  
**Springfield Hospital does not provide Childbirth services**
  - ii. For Q1-Q3 of FY 2021, please provide the number of newborns screened for Medicaid without an application and the number of those newborns who received Medicaid.  
**Springfield Hospital does not provide Childbirth services**
4. 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*, **See responses below**.
  - a. patients whose primary language is not English,
  - b. BIPOC patients,
  - c. patients with no or intermittent broadband and/or cellular telephone service, and
  - d. patients who are not U.S. citizens.

5. 2a

4

**a)Patients whose primary language is not English** - Upon registration, demographic information is gathered regarding primary language, race, and ethnicity. This information becomes part of the patient record. We utilize the AT&T language line to assist anyone whose primary language is not English. The language line is a user-friendly service reached by dialing an 800 number and indicating which language you need for interpretation.

**b)Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC)** - Springfield Hospital is non-discriminatory regarding patient care as well as employment. Springfield Hospital collects demographic information upon registration. Data regarding access, efficacy or satisfaction for these populations are included in combined internal data, but not segregated by group. Our 2019 needs assessment asked 551 respondents "When you think of challenges in the community where you live, what are you most concerned about?" Racial or cultural discrimination scored the lowest (9.3% vs. 71.0% for drug and or alcohol abuse).

**c)Patients with no or intermittent broadband and/or cellular telephone service** – Springfield Hospital probes overall access to services through its community health needs assessment process. The key issue relating to access identified in the most recent CHNA indicated affordability as the leading issue. Community concerns identified lack of economic opportunity, affordable housing, crime, public transportation, among others. Broadband and/or cellular telephone services was not identified as a primary issue.

**d)Patients who are not U.S. citizens** – Springfield Hospital does not ask whether patients are U.S. citizens and we do not collect any such data. Similar to the above, Springfield Hospital does not discriminate. We are here to serve all who come to us for health care.

Thank you for the important work that you do every day for Vermonters. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the HCA at [hcapolicystaff@vtlegalaid.org](mailto:hcapolicystaff@vtlegalaid.org) if you have any questions or concerns regarding our information requests. We are happy to work with you to alleviate any confusion

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and to ensure that our requests do not create unreasonable burdens for the hospitals.

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<sup>3</sup>Deemed newborns are children who were born to 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.