


**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
AMBULATORY HEALTH SERVICES**

***MEMORANDUM***

To: Health Center Directors  
Clinical Directors  
Health Care Coordinators  
Clerical Supervisors

From: Susan Pingree, Director 

Re: Patient Residency Policy

Date: March 15, 2004

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Attached is a copy of the Department's policy regarding verification of patient residency. Please ensure that all staff fully understand this policy. It is effective immediately.

The policy requires patients to sign the attached letter if they do not have verification as listed in the policy. It also requires that only clinical staff may turn a patient away, after determining that they are sufficiently medically stable. Please be sure that there are appropriate protocols at your health center to follow this policy.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in implementing this policy. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Attach (1)

Copy: Tom Storey  
Sue Robbins  
Dave Ryba  
Nina Park  
Nan Feyler  
Gloria Alford  
Gerry Keys  
Jennifer Lopez-Hunt

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
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**MEMORANDUM**

March 15, 2004

TO: See Distribution

FROM: Susan Pingree, Director of Ambulatory Health Services <sup>AP</sup>  
Thomas Storey, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director of Clinical Services <sup>TS</sup>

SUBJECT: Patient Residency Policy

**PATIENT RESIDENCY POLICY**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 18, 2004

**SUPERCEDES:** "Eligibility for Services in the City of Philadelphia Health Care Centers" policy dated October 22, 2002

**1. RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

Any City of Philadelphia resident may receive primary health care services at any of the City health care centers. In order to receive services, all new patients are required to show documentation, which verifies that they are Philadelphia residents. There is no requirement that a patient be a citizen or have a certain immigration status.


**2. DEFINITION OF RESIDENCY**

A person is considered a resident of Philadelphia if he or she lives in Philadelphia. There is no duration requirement for residency.

**3. ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION**

Any one of the following information will be accepted to verify that a patient is a resident of Philadelphia:

- Pennsylvania driver's license

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- Pennsylvania state issued non-driver's license ID
  - **Any** photo ID which includes the patient's name and address
  - Passport with patient's name and address
  - Immigration visa with patient's name and address
  - Utility bill with patient's name and address
  - Rent receipt with patient's name
  - Philadelphia library card with patient's name
  - Lease or mortgage with patient's name
  - A letter from a government agency, social service or faith-based organization or other community-based organization, on their letterhead, indicating the patient's address.

#### 4. THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT FOR PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Patients will not be required to provide photo identification as verification of their residency.

#### 5. SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED

At no time shall patients be required to provide a Social Security card or number. For insurance reasons, designated staff will continue to ask for Social Security numbers for patients who have them. However, it should be fully understood that a patient is never required to provide a Social Security number or card in order to receive care.

#### 6. EXCEPTIONS

The only exceptions to this policy, which limits primary care health services to patients with documentation of Philadelphia residency, are:

- A. when a health care center clinician (nurse, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant or physician) authorizes treatment; or
- B. when the patient is a non- resident but is MA enrolled and has selected a health care center physician as his or her primary care physician (PCP); or
- C. other health care center-based programs provided to non-Philadelphia residents at that program's discretion. These programs include TB, immunizations, STD treatment and Family Planning.

## **7. PATIENTS WITHOUT RESIDENCY VERIFICATION MUST BE SEEN FOR ASSESSMENT OF CLINICAL NEEDS**

A patient who is unable to verify his or her residency should be referred to a designated clinician (either a nurse, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant or physician) to determine if there are clinical reasons (e.g., medical conditions or symptoms) that require the patient to be seen for care before leaving the center. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether the patient is sufficiently medically stable to leave the health care center.

If a clinician identifies a medical reason for the patient to be seen, the patient will be asked to provide proof of residence at future visits. The patient will be given a letter that explains the forms of residency verification that will be required in order for him or her to receive health care in the future. (see attachment)

A copy of the letter should be signed by the patient and placed in the patient's chart in order to assure that appropriate residency verification is requested of the patient when he or she comes in for the next visit.

The patient will not be seen again without verification of residency unless a clinician determines a medical reason for a visit.

## **8. PATIENTS WITHOUT VERIFICATION WHO ARE TURNED AWAY**

If a patient who lacks residency verification is turned away after a clinician's review of his or her needs, health care center staff should explain to the patient that he or she is free to return either with a new appointment or as a walk-in when the patient can provide proper residency verification. The types of acceptable documentation shall be explained to the patient and he or she will be given a letter explaining this. (see attachment)

## **9. NON-CLINICAL STAFF SHALL NOT TURN PATIENTS AWAY**

At no time shall a non-clinical health center employee refuse treatment or send a patient away for not providing acceptable verification or any other information requested. Such a decision will be made only by a clinician after evaluating the patient's clinical needs.

## **10. THIS POLICY SHALL BE WIDELY CIRCULATED**

An explanation and copies of this policy shall be widely available at the health care centers and distributed to community-based agencies that serve immigrant or homeless Philadelphians or other patients who may face complications in obtaining verification of their residency.