

Denied Medical Assistance or Charity Care?

Call Pennsylvania Health Law Project's toll-free HELPLINE for help at (800) 274-3258.

About the Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP)

PHLP is a nationally recognized expert and consultant on access to health care for low-income consumers, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. For more than two decades, PHLP has engaged in direct advocacy on behalf of individual consumers while working on the kinds of health policy changes that promise the most to the Pennsylvanians in greatest need.



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Can't Afford Your Hospital Bills?

—
Know Your Rights

A Guide to Charity Care in PA
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Charity Care *in Pennsylvania* — Know Your Health Care Rights!

Can't afford your hospital bills?

First, apply for Medical Assistance. Second, apply for Charity Care.

(1) Apply for Medical Assistance

Medical Assistance is insurance provided by the state. To get Medical Assistance, your income must be below certain limits, and you must meet other rules.

The hospital can help you apply. Ask for help in the billing office if you need an application, or if you need a doctor to fill out an “employability” form.

You may be able to get old medical bills paid, if the bills are less than four months old.

(2) Apply for Charity Care

Nearly all hospitals in Pennsylvania offer free or low-cost care (called “charity care”). Ask the billing office for an application.

Under state law, hospitals that apply for Tobacco Settlement Act funding must tell you about charity care on their websites, on discharge papers, and on bills.

The hospital has to give you detailed information about its charity care rules, such as what the income limits are, if you ask for it.

In making a charity care decision, the hospital cannot consider your house, car, retirement account, and other “non-liquid” assets. It also cannot ask whether you have a credit card.

The hospital should not take you to collections until it has helped you apply for Medical Assistance and Charity Care.

What if I have a medical emergency?

Go to the nearest Emergency Room. The hospital cannot turn you away, even if you do not have insurance. It cannot ask you to pay before treating you. The hospital must treat you, but it can bill you afterwards.

Is your hospital breaking these rules?

Call 1-866-DPW-TIPS

Report the hospital to the state’s Bureau of Program Integrity. Explain what happened.

You can call Pennsylvania Health Law Project’s toll-free HELPLINE for free legal help at (800) 274-3258.