



Warm Springs Counseling Center (WSCC) Sliding Fee discount program policy

Effective date: Revised 07 December 2021

Purpose: To make available discounted or free services to those in need of behavioral health treatment.

Policy: All patients seeking services with Warm Springs Counseling Center (DBA Children's Home Society) are assured that they will be treated regardless of ability to pay. No one will be refused services because of a lack of financial means to pay. This program is to offer discounted or free care to those who have no means, or limited means, to pay for their mental health care (uninsured or insured).

Warm Springs Counseling Center will offer a Sliding Fee Discount Program to all who are unable to pay for their services. This program will base eligibility on a client's family size and annual household income. Warm Springs Counseling Center will not discriminate on the basis of an individual's *race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression*. The Federal Poverty Guidelines are used in creating and annually updating the sliding fee schedule (SFS) to determine eligibility. Hereafter in this document, WSCC shall mean Warm Springs Counseling Center.

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

1. **Notification:** WSCC will notify patients of the Sliding Fee Discount Program by:
 - The Financial Policy form will be provided to all patients at time of service. This will inform them of our billing practices and also serve as a means of notifying them about our Sliding Fee Discount program.
 - Notification of the Sliding Fee Discount program will be offered to all patients at the time of intake. This can be by phone, in person at check in or via our website. If declined by the responsible party, the chart will be noted that it was offered/declined.
 - Warm Springs Counseling center does not send client balances to collections. The program is intended to avoid this situation due to financial hardships.
 - An explanation of our Sliding Fee Discount program and our application will be available on our website. This will be updated to reflect changes such as annual Federal Poverty Guidelines for example.
 - Warm Springs Counseling Center will maintain notices of the Sliding Fee Discount program in our waiting area.
2. **Request for Discount:** Requests for discounted services may be made by patients, family members, social services staff or others who are aware of existing financial hardship. The Sliding Fee Discount Program will only be available for clinic visits and telehealth. Information and forms can be obtained from the front desk or via our website at <https://childrenshomesociety.com/>

3. **Administration:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program policies and procedures will be administered through the Business Office Manager and/or their designee. Information about this program will be provided to patients at any time. Staff are to offer assistance with questions about the process. Dignity and confidentiality will be respected for all who seek and/or are provided mental health services.
4. **Completion of the Application:** The patient/responsible party must complete the Sliding Fee Discount application in its entirety and turn it in to the Business Office. Forms may be mailed, delivered in person or sent by email. By signing the Sliding Fee Discount Program application, persons are confirming their income to Warm Springs Counseling Center as disclosed on the application form. Incomplete applications lacking any information especially financial/income documents such as W2, etc will not be processed and returned to the applicants. This is to ensure they receive a fair and equal chance to complete the application without any prejudice. Before any subsidy awards are made, the Warm Springs Counseling Center Executive Director must be made aware and approve said discount by signing the form.
5. **Eligibility:** Discounts will be based on income family size. If a client has insurance, it is the responsibility of the client/responsible party to determine coverage.
 - 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 as members of one family. Warm Springs Counseling Center will also accept non-related household members when calculating family size.
 - b. Income is defined as: gross wages; salaries; tips; income from business and self-employment.
6. **Income Verification:** Applicants may provide one of the following: a 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. Accurate and adequate information must be made available to determine eligibility for the program.
7. **Discounts:** Those with incomes at or below 100% of poverty will be charged a nominal fee of \$15. Those with incomes above 100%, but at or below 200% of poverty, will be charged a nominal fee according to the attached sliding fee schedule. The sliding fee schedule will be updated during the first quarter of every calendar year with the latest Federal Poverty Guidelines. This discount must be approved by the Executive Director of WSCC. Copies of the FPG will be made available to clients.
8. **Nominal Fee:** Patients with incomes above 100% of poverty, but at or below 200% poverty will be charged a nominal fee according to the attached sliding fee schedule and based on their family size and income. Patients 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. Any nominal fee must be approved by the Executive Director prior to being awarded.
9. **Waiving of Charges:** In certain situations, patients may not be able to pay the nominal or discount fee. Waiving of all charges must be approved by the WSCC Executive Director by signing the application form. Any waiving of charges in full will be documented in the patient's file and the supporting application will be electronically saved in their chart.
10. **Applicant Notification:** The Sliding Fee Discount Program determination will be provided to the applicant(s) in writing 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, WSCC will work with the client and/or responsible party to establish payment arrangements. Sliding Fee Discount Program applications cover outstanding client balance for six months prior to application date and any balances incurred within 12 months after the approved date unless their financial situation changes significantly. The applicant has

the option to reapply after 6 months has 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 six months or the expiration of their last Sliding Fee Discount Program application.

11. **Refusal to Pay:** If a client verbally expresses an unwillingness to pay or vacates the premises without paying for services, the patient will be contacted in writing regarding their payment obligations. If the patient is not on the sliding fee schedule, a copy of the sliding fee discount program application will be offered. Should the Sliding Fee Program information be declined, the chart will be noted. If the patient does not make the effort to pay or fails to respond within 60 days, at this point it is deemed appropriate to refer them to management to discuss options. If information should arise that shows a dire financial situation for the client, it may be appropriate to waive the balance in full. A completed application with supporting documents must be submitted with final approval from the WSCC Executive Director.
12. **Record Keeping:** Information related to Sliding Fee Discount Program decisions will be maintained and preserved in a centralized, confidential file located in the Business Manager's Office. This will be secured in a locked file cabinet. Preserving the dignity of those receiving discounted or free care is critical to the ethics and mission of WSCC.
 - Applicants that have been approved for the Sliding Fee Discount Program will be logged into WSCC's practice management system, noting names of applicants, dates of coverage and percentage of coverage.
 - The Business Office Manager will maintain an additional monthly log identifying Sliding Fee Discount Program recipients and dollar amounts. Denials and applications sent but not returned will also be logged.
13. **Policy and Procedure review:** The Sliding Fee Scale will be updated based on the current Federal Poverty Guidelines. Warm Springs Counseling Center will also review possible changes in our policy and procedures and for examining institutional practices which may serve as barriers preventing eligible patients from having access to our community care provisions.
14. **Budget:** During the annual budget process, an estimated amount of Sliding Fee Discount Program service will be placed into the budget as a deduction from revenue.

ATTACHMENTS:

2021 Sliding Fee Scale

Patient Application for the Sliding Fee Discount Program

Approval:

Revised:

Reviewed by: _____ **Executive Director**

_____ **Clinical Supervisor**

_____ **Business Office Manager**