

Galveston County Coordinated Community Clinic (4C's) Operational Policy

Approved 05/26/11
GB
-Effective 05/26/05

Audience

This policy applies to operations in the 4C's Clinics and all 4C's employees.

Policy

The Galveston County Coordinated Community Clinic operates as Federally Qualified Health Center and receives funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for operations. As a grantee, the clinic operates under HRSA guidelines, as well as policies established by the 4C's Governing Board. *Information about the policies approved by the 4C's Governing Board can be viewed at: <http://www.gchd.org/boards/GBboardpolicy.htm>.* This document is intended to outline the Operational Policies of the 4C's Clinics. For more information about Federally Qualified Health Centers see <http://www.bphc.hrsa.gov/about/>

The 4C's Clinics are governed by a Board selected from persons nominated by the Galveston County United Board of Health. The majority of the membership of the 4C's Governing Board is comprised of persons who use the clinic for primary health care. The 4C's Governing Board provides high level policy direction for the operation of the clinic (The 4C's Governing Board Bylaws can be viewed at: <http://www.gchd.org/boards/2009/4%20C's-Bylaws-Revised0408.pdf>). Annually, the 4C's Governing Board will review and approve policies on the following: scope of services, hours of operation, locations of operations, patient grievance procedure, client eligibility, development of clinical protocols, patient referrals and tracking system, Patient and Clinic Rights and Responsibilities, sliding fee scale, fee schedule, patient payment, and any other operations as outlined in 4C's Governing Board Bylaws and HRSA grant requirements.

The Chief Executive Officer is hired by the 4C's Governing Board and provides direction for the clinic's operations, as directed by the 4C's Governing Board. The CEO delegates operating authority to administrative staff responsible for various operational and fiscal duties within the clinic.

Scope of Services

The 4C's Clinics provide a wide array of medical, dental and mental health counseling ambulatory primary care services to eligible and registered residents of Galveston County. Changes in the scope of services provided in the clinics must be approved by the 4C's Governing Board and HRSA. A complete statement can be found in the current *HRSA Notice of Grant Award*. (See HRSA document files at <http://www.bphc.hrsa.gov/policy/> for details regarding change of scope.)

Hours of Operation

The clinic operates during hours that have been approved by the 4C's Governing Board. These hours include daily operations M-F, 8-5 and extended weekday evening hours. More information about clinic hours can be found at: <http://www.gchd.org/4cs/index.htm>

The clinic also operates a Saturday Clinic from 10-5 in the Texas City clinic only. The Saturday Clinic is made available due to the 4C's award of the Increased Demand for Services (IDS) Economic Stimulus Grant. The IDS Grant is designed to increase access to healthcare for the nation's un- and underinsured while also providing economic stimulus for the national economy. Funding is anticipated to end in March

2011. More information about the Saturday clinic hours may be viewed at:
www.gchd.org/4cs/Saturdays.htm

Locations

There are currently two clinic locations. In Texas City a clinic is located at 2000 Texas Avenue in the Community Family Center, and in Galveston a clinic is located at 4700 Broadway in the Island Community Center. Location of clinic operations is also part of the HRSA scope of service statement. Changes in location must be approved by the 4C's Governing Board and the HRSA office.

Patient Grievance Procedure

As per the Customer Service Policy of the 4C's Governing Board, as public servants, we will be fair, open, ethical, responsive, accountable, and dedicated to the public we serve. It is the goal of the 4C's to address and resolve all patient concerns and problems at the lowest level and in the most immediate and effective manner. Issues and Complaints that cannot be resolved by staff will be addressed by the 4C's Administration Office. 4C's Administrative Staff will investigate, track, and communicate with patients to resolve the patients concerns and problems as quickly as possible. Complaints that cannot be resolved by 4C's Administration are investigated and resolved by the Executive Office.

Eligibility

HRSA requirements provide that the clinic must screen all prospective patients for eligibility for discounted service. The clinic requires that all prospective patients prove their residency, income and family composition by completing an "Application for Discounted Services" which can be found at: <http://www.gchd.org/4cs/Application-for-Discounted-Services-2008.pdf>. The information needed to become eligible for 4C's services is on the "Application for Discount Services Checklist" which can be found at: http://www.gchd.org/4cs/Services_checklist.pdf.

Development of Clinical Protocols

The Medical Director and Dental Director will develop evidence based clinical guidelines and protocols for treating common conditions. These guidelines will be reviewed and updated on a biennial basis. Current guidelines and protocols are available on the Galveston County Health District's internal website for access by employees only.

Patient Referrals and Tracking System

4C's Medical providers may refer 4C's patients to outside providers of specialty care. Generally, 4C's patients are financially responsible for all referral care in accordance with the financial policy of the entity to whom the patient is referred for specialty medical evaluation or diagnostic tests. Patient referrals will be tracked and followed until the treatment and all documentation about the referral is completed and placed in the 4C's medical record. The effectiveness of specialty referrals will be periodically reported to the 4C's Governing Board.

Consumer Bill of Rights

The 4C's believes that patients have certain basic rights, and therefore subscribes to rights and responsibilities enumerated in the *Patient and Clinic Rights and Responsibilities*. This document is given to every patient each time they are screened and determined to be eligible for 4C's services. The document, found at: <http://www.gchd.org/4cs/patient-clinic-rights.pdf>, is written in compliance with the *Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) Policy Information Notice (PIN) 98-23* and the *BPHC New Start Protocol*.

Sliding Fee Scale

HRSA requires that the clinic set fees for services that are based on Usual, Customary and Reasonable (UCR) and/or the Relative Value Unit (RVU) rates for our service area of Galveston County. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, the clinic offers medical and dental services on a sliding fee scale. The 4C's Governing Board reviews and approves the sliding fee scale on an annual basis. This scale is based on the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines that are published annually. The clinic offers services at a 0% pay scale for those persons who are at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. The percentage of payment expected from the patient slides up until those persons at more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level are expected to pay the full, customary charge for services received. (Current Federal Poverty Level information available on the HRSA web site <http://www.bphc.hrsa.gov/>)

Fees for All 4C's Services

Fees for 4C's services are based on the Usual, Customary and Reasonable (UCR) rates and/or the Relative Value Unit (RVU). The fee schedules for medical and dental services are reviewed and approved by the 4C's Governing Board annually. Patients are charged these fees for the services they receive subject to adjustment according to the sliding fee schedule.

Patient Payment

The 4C's Clinic provides medical and dental services to qualified patients. The 4C's Clinic's capacity to serve the poor and uninsured is in part dependent upon revenue received from patient collections. Clinic patients are responsible for medical and dental charges based on their financial status and their predetermined percent of pay. Patients with an outstanding balance at the time of service are encouraged to remit payment at that time. If payment is not remitted at the time of service, patients will be billed. Pursuant to HRSA regulations, patients are provided services regardless of their ability to pay.

Patient Warnings and Terminations

It is a policy of the 4C's Governing Board to issue warning letters to patients with minor behavioral infractions and to terminate its provider – patient relationship with patients who have major behavioral infractions. For a major behavioral infraction, a patient's access to the clinic may be temporarily suspended for 30 days until a decision can be made by a review panel. The process for making a termination decision will involve a review a panel appointed by the Board Chair which includes the CEO and/or designee(s) and 1 or 2 Governing Board members. Patients issued a letter of termination notice will be advised of their right to appeal to the 4C's Governing Board thru the CEO. Terminated patient's that have committed a major behavioral infraction that is criminal in nature will not be able to re-apply for services thru the 4C's Clinic. For patient terminated for major behavioral infractions that is not criminal in nature, will be allowed to reapply/reregister to obtain services at the 4C's Clinics after one (1) year.

NOTE: Current 4C's Governing Board Policies establishing Scope of Service, hours of operation, eligibility, fees, etc can be viewed at <http://www.gchd.org/boards/GBboardpolicy.htm>.