

Bath Community Hospital Announces New Financial Assistance Program

Each year, Bath Community Hospital (BCH) offers financial assistance to income-eligible patients with limited or no health insurance, assuring that no patient is denied healthcare because of their inability to pay. Now, BCH will have the opportunity to help even more residents of Bath, Highland and Alleghany Counties through the Bath Community Access Program. This new program increases income eligibility from 200% of the poverty level to 350%, and has been restructured to make the application process easier and more discreet.

“We understand the difficulties so many of our residents face with rising health care costs, especially in this economy,” said Lori Gambrell, BCH’s chief financial officer. “As a mission-driven hospital, we want to make sure no one falls through the cracks. That’s why one of our goals for this new program is to actively identify income-eligible patients and help them through the process.”

Gambrell believes that changes in the way potential aid recipients will be counseled and screened will encourage more people to apply. “Screenings and help with the application process will take place at the BCH business office in Mitchelltown,” said Gambrell. “Helping patients with their insurance policies and payment options is part of what we do in the business office, so anyone wishing to be screened for financial assistance will not be singled out. It’s a discreet process.”

Eligible patients will also receive a health insurance type of card to present to their health care providers, which will not differentiate patients receiving financial aid from any other patient.

The program provides 3 month, 6 month or 12 month assistance depending on financial and employment status, or whether the applicant is on a fixed income, a seasonal employee, or for anyone who has recently lost a job or has had a decrease in pay.

“The new income guidelines have increased, based on a sliding scale, so more individuals and families will be eligible for financial aid,” said Gambrell. “For example, a family of four with an annual income of \$77,000 or less would be eligible for some aid.”

Patients may reapply as often as necessary, and though the Bath Community Access Program only applies to Bath, Highland and Alleghany County residents, Gambrell said they will consider anyone who has been a long-time hospital patient.

The BCH business office is open five days a week beginning at 8:00 am, with evening hours, two days week. Counselors will screen residents to determine the programs, or mix of programs, appropriate to the applicants current situation, such as eligibility for Medicaid, prescription assistance, the free clinic, or financial aid from the hospital.

. For anyone interested in finding out if they are Medicaid eligible, they can visit the Virginia Department Social Services website for a free online screening found under the *Benefits* heading.

Bath Community Hospital is providing more financial aid to patients in 2009, despite the recent termination of Virginia's Indigent Care Program, which helped supplement acute care hospitals' charity care in the past. In 2008 alone, BCH provided over \$800,000 in charity care, not including community outreach, which includes free health care screenings and education.

For more information about Bath Community Hospital's financial assistance policy and to make a screening appointment, call the business office at 540-839-7045 or toll-free at 866-839-7100.

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