

RCW 70.41.400 Patient billing—Medical debt reporting

prohibition—Application of consumer protection act—Exceptions. (1)

Prior to or upon discharge, a hospital must furnish each patient receiving inpatient services a written statement providing a list of physician groups and other professional partners that commonly provide care for patients at the hospital and from whom the patient may receive a bill, along with contact phone numbers for those groups. The statement must prominently display a phone number that a patient can call for assistance if the patient has any questions about any of the bills they receive after discharge that relate to their hospital stay.

(2)(a) Hospitals, physician groups, and other professional partners may not furnish information relating to a medical debt as defined in RCW 19.16.100 to a consumer credit reporting agency. A medical debt is void and unenforceable if a hospital, physician group, or professional partner violates this subsection (2)(a).

(b) A violation of (a) of this subsection is deemed a violation of the law governing the license of the hospital, physician group, or professional partner.

(3) The legislature finds that the practices covered by this section are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. A violation of this section is not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business and is an unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW.

(4) This section does not apply to any hospital owned or operated by a health maintenance organization under chapter 48.46 RCW when providing prepaid health care services to enrollees of the health maintenance organization or any of its wholly owned subsidiary carriers. [2025 c 145 s 5; 2006 c 60 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2006 c 60: "The legislature finds that the implementation of health information technologies in hospitals, including electronic medical records, has the potential to significantly reduce cost, improve patient outcomes, and simplify the administration of health care. Further, the legislature finds that the number of and complexity of the bills that result from a hospital stay can be confusing to patients. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to encourage hospitals to design the implementation of health information technologies so as to allow the hospital to provide the patient, prior to or upon discharge, clearly understandable information about the services provided during the hospital stay, and the bills the patient is likely to receive related to each of those services. Recognizing that complete implementation of the technologies required to achieve this goal will take a number of years, the legislature intends to require that hospitals immediately begin working toward the goal by compiling and communicating information to assist patients in understanding their bills." [2006 c 60 s 1.]