

WSHF Grantees Client Provider Choice Policy Report

A research project was conducted to determine oral health care grantees' policies regarding a client's right to change providers, whether that provider be a dental student or a regular oral health care provider. Washington Square Health Foundation grantees contacted were Howard Area Community Center, The Children's Clinic, Little City Foundation, St. Bernard Hospital, Lawndale Christian Health Center, and Erie Family Health Center. These six organizations have submitted oral health care grant requests to the Foundation within the last five years. The survey was conducted in July of 2015 by the Washington Square Health Foundation Intern. Some of these organizations do not use dental students in their practices, while others regularly have dental students, specifically University of Illinois School of Dentistry students, treat their patients.

Out of the six oral health care providers surveyed, St. Bernard Hospital, The Children's Clinic, Erie Family Health Center, and Lawndale Christian Health Center all responded to having an affiliation with University of Illinois and its School of Dentistry. The later three have dental students regularly working in their organizations for certain rotations during the year.

- The Children's Clinic has, on average, 20 University of Illinois students working 40 hours per week for a month long rotation.
- Erie Family Health Center has, on average, 32 University of Illinois students working 36 hours per week for a month long rotation.
- Lawndale Christian Health Center has, on average, 20 University of Illinois students working 40 hours per week for a month long rotation.

The Foundation surveyed all six of the organizations for information regarding the policy (ies) concerning a patient's right to change providers, whether that provider be a dental student or a regular health care provider, utilizing the following questions:

- What is your policy regarding a patient who requests another dental provider after being initially treated?

- Can the patient request another provider and on what basis, or must the patient receive care from the same dental provider who initially provided the treatment?
- Do you have the same patient treatment policy for your regular dental staff and student dental staff?
- Does the above policy (ies) differ in regard to the type of patient reimbursement payment? For example, does the policy differ regarding the type of available patient payment for service, i.e. Medicare, Medicaid, ACA policies, dental insurance, self-pay, true no pay charitable care, etc.

The results were as follows:

- All six oral health care providers, with or without dental students, offer patients either an option to choose their provider or change their provider at any time.
- Each of the providers who use dental students offer patients who do not wish to be treated by dental students the choice to be seen only by regular clinic dental staff during their appointments.
- When applicable, there was no variance of treatment policy between student staff and regular staff of the organization.
- All six providers stated that their treatment policy does not differ in regards to different reimbursement and payment types.

In conclusion, it is estimated that 74 University of Illinois students work 11,008 hours per year at these organizations. These students work under the same policies as the dental staffs of their host organizations. It is the general policy of all of the oral health care providers to give their patients the ability to choose their dental provider, change their dental provider after initial visit, and/or opt out of being treated by dental students.

Submitted by:

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