

Sliding Fee Scale Guidance for Local Health Department Clinical Services



A **sliding fee scale (SFS)** can be used in clinical programs to make services more affordable. It adjusts costs based on a client's income and family size. Local health departments can provide clinical services that require a sliding fee scale, as well as services that do not.

Quick Overview of Guidance

- **Clinical Services Requiring SFS**
 - **AA101 Maternal Health** → SFS slides to zero (10A NCAC 43B .0109; Title V).
 - **AA351 Child Health** → SFS slides to zero (10A NCAC 43B .0109; Title V).
 - **AA151 Family Planning** → SFS slides to zero (Title X).
 - **Contractor caveat:** If your LHD assures services in **AA101** or **AA351** and **contractors receive Title V funds**, ensure they **use an SFS that slides to zero**.
- **Mandatory No-Cost Services (No SFS)**
 - **STI** and **TB** clinical examination/treatment → **No cost** to client; **no SFS** allowed (G.S. 130A-144(e)).
- **Other Services (e.g., Adult Health, Primary Care, Dental)**
 - LHD may **choose** to apply an SFS as local policy.
 - If services are provided to **maternal or child health clients**, **10A NCAC 43B .0109** rules apply.

Decision Points for Determining Use of SFS

1. Identify the service type.

- a. **If STI or TB examination/treatment** → **Provide at no cost** to the client. A sliding fee scale (SFS) **cannot** be used.
 - i. Authority: **G.S. 130A-144(e)** (Local health departments must provide these services at no cost).
- b. **If not STI/TB** → Go to Step 2.

2. Determine if the service is in a program that requires an SFS.

- a. **AA101 Maternal Health** → **Required SFS that slides to zero** (10A NCAC 43B .0109 and Title V).
- b. **AA351 Child Health** → **Required SFS that slides to zero** (10A NCAC 43B .0109 and Title V).
- c. **AA151 Family Planning** → **SFS required per Title X**. Apply Title X fee policies, including use of an SFS. (Follow program-specific guidance for how fees scale—consult Title X policy for sliding-to-zero requirements.)
- d. **Other clinical services** (e.g., Adult Health, Primary Care, Dental, etc.) → SFS may or may not be required; proceed to Step 3 or 4.

3. For programs funded (in whole or part) by Title V (AA101/AA351 and any service receiving Title V funds):

- a. **Client income < 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)** → **Charge \$0** for Title V-supported services.
- b. **Client income ≥ 100% FPL** → Use the **LHD's SFS** to determine the percentage of client participation in the cost.

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4. For other clinical services (not AA101, AA351, AA151 AND do not use Title V funding to support):
- a. The LHD may choose to apply an SFS as local policy.
 - i. If the LHD applies an SFS → Use the local SFS.
 - ii. If the LHD does not apply an SFS → Bill per local policy without SFS.

References

- **10A NCAC 43B .0109 – Client and Third-Party Fees**
 - (a) If a local provider imposes any charges on clients for maternal and child health services, such charges:
 - (1) Will be applied according to a public schedule of charges;
 - (2) Will not be imposed on low-income individuals or their families;
 - (3) Will be adjusted to reflect the income, resources, and family size of the individual receiving the services.
 - (b) If client fees are charged, providers must make reasonable efforts to collect from third-party payors.
 - (c) Client and third-party fees collected by the local provider for the provision of maternal and child health services must be used, upon approval of the program, to expand, maintain, or enhance these services. No person shall be denied services because of an inability to pay. Link: <http://ncrules.state.nc.us/ncac/title%2010a%20-%20health%20and%20human%20services/chapter%2043%20-%20personal%20health/subchapter%20b/10a%20ncac%2043b%20.0109.pdf>
- **G.S. 130A-144(e) – Investigation and control measures** Requires local health departments to provide STI and TB examination/treatment at no cost to patients. Link: https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_130a/gs_130a-144.html
- **Title V (Maternal & Child Health Services Block Grant)** When services are supported by Title V, requires the use of a sliding fee scale for services, ensuring that care is accessible regardless of the ability to pay. Fees must be based on the family's income and size, typically adjusted for those at or below 100% of the federal poverty level. Link: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12685?hl=Title+V&s=1&r=2>
NC's Program, Link: <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/title-v/nc-mchbg-application/download?attachment>
- **Title X (Family Planning)** Requires use of an SFS for Family Planning services; consult program guidance for the specific sliding requirements. Title X of the Public Health Service Act mandates that recipients use a sliding fee discount schedule based on a patient's ability to pay for family planning services. Services must be free for clients with family incomes at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), while discounted services are required for those between 101% and 250% FPL. Link: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10051>