

Myth Busters

MYTH: Hospital charge data is hidden from patients.

FACT: In a majority of states, hospital charge data is accessible to consumers in at least one way.

Hospital charge data is available to consumers in a number of different ways. Primarily, state laws govern the disclosure of certain hospital charge data, such as required disclosure of the most common diagnoses, disclosure of charge information upon a patient's request, or required disclosure or posting of the hospital's "charge master."¹ Furthermore, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has recently released the average charges for the 100 most common Medicare inpatient procedures and 30 types of hospital outpatient procedures for Medicare beneficiaries.²

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), at least 30 states have laws or proposed legislation on disclosure, transparency, reporting, or publication of provider or hospital charges.³ Consumers may access charge information in a number of different ways, including the following:

- From the hospital, upon request;
- Schedule of charges required under state law to be accessible to consumers;
- Price reports put out by state agencies;
- Web-based resources on hospital charges put out by state agencies;
- Health insurer consumer tools;
- All-Payer Claims Databases (APCDs), and reports developed based on this information.⁴

It is important to note that states vary in how hospital charge disclosure laws are structured and written, so consumers in different states will have different ways of accessing hospital charge data.

As the push toward price transparency grows stronger, health insurers, federal programs, states,

and other organizations are developing tools for consumers to compare hospital prices and quality. Furthering this goal, the Affordable Care Act requires health insurers to report to the Department of Health and Human Services the total percentage of premium revenue that is spent on reimbursement of medical claims, activities related to improving care quality, and other non-claims costs. This information will be publicly available to consumers on the HHS website.⁵ This requirement, combined with CMS' release of hospital charge data and new state and federal price transparency initiatives, will allow consumers in most states to access some hospital charge data in at least one way.

For More Information:

- [Learn](#) about state and federal laws related to payment reform.
- [Read](#) about the Affordable Care Act's provisions related to health information.

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¹ "Charge master" is a list of prices for all services, goods and procedures that have their own charges (CA Office of Statewide Planning and Development, Available at:

<http://www.oshpd.ca.gov/HID/Products/Hospitals/Chrgmstr/>).

² "Medicare Provider Charge Data," CMS, June 2, 2013. Available at: <http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Medicare-Provider-Charge-Data/index.html>.

³ "State and Federal Actions Related to Transparency and Disclosure of Health Charges and Provider Payments," NCSL, June 2013, Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/transparency-and-disclosure-health-costs.aspx#Table_1.

⁴ APCDs are statewide databases that collect claims information from a variety of health care payers, and are used to inform cost containment and quality improvement efforts.

⁵ ACA § 2718; 42 U.S.C. § 300gg-18.