



**Lancaster County Office of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services**

Basic Information Series Volume: MH-9

**For Information Call:**

Crisis Intervention: 717-394-2631  
Mental Health Case Management 717-393-0421  
Administration Unit: 717-299-8021

## Liability: Determining how much you can afford to pay

# Basic Information Series

### What is a liability?

If you or a family member receives mental health services through the Lancaster County Office of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services you may sometimes be required to pay a share of the costs of those services.

*That share is your financial liability.*

Some services, such as case management, vocational rehab, and family-based mental health services, are provided at no cost. If you receive any other services, you may be required to pay all or a share of the expenses. That share is based on your income.

If the person to receive services is under age 18, then his or her parents or legal guardians are responsible for the liability.

### How is my liability determined?

When you come to the BH/DS Services office at 275 Hess Blvd for the first time, you must go through an "intake."

The intake has two parts: A clinical evaluation and a financial liability.

- ◆ First, an intake worker asks you questions to decide what type of problem you are having and what services might help you.
- ◆ The second part of the intake is the financial liability assessment. An appointment for the liability is usually scheduled for the same day as the intake, or within a short time.

At the liability assessment, you will work with the BH/DS liability technician. The goal is to figure how much money you are "liable" for; that means how much money you are responsible for paying in order to receive services. In many cases, the liability comes to zero, meaning there is no charge.

### What is an assessment like?

The liability technician looks over the income documents you bring along, may ask a few questions, and will photocopy some information from your documents. Then the clerk enters the information into the computer and the amount of your liability is automatically calculated.

After the form is filled out, the liability technician can tell you how much you will be responsible to pay. You will be asked to sign a form verifying that the information is correct, and that you understand your liability amount.

### How can I make the assessment easy?

Arrive on time with the proper documents (*see other side for more information on documentation*).

### How does payment of liabilities work?

After the assessment, you may be responsible for making a monthly payment, based on the actual services you receive. It will be no more than your liability--and perhaps less.

For example, if you are liable for \$20 per month, and during the month you (or your child) use only \$10 worth of services, you pay only \$10. If you use \$20 in a month, you will pay \$20. If you use \$600, you still pay only \$20.

If you do not pay your liability, you could be denied services.

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## Documentation:

### What you need to bring

When an appointment is scheduled for a liability, the BH/DS Fiscal Department sends you a list of all documents you should bring for the assessment.

If you have an appointment for a liability and you don't have this checklist, call the liability technician at 717-393-0421 and ask for one.

The documents on the checklist include:

- ◆ tax returns
- ◆ pay stubs
- ◆ proof of health payments
- ◆ medical insurance cards
- ◆ Names, birth dates, and social security numbers for all dependents in family

Bring all of the documents on the checklist. Without some documents, the assessment can not take place. Some of the documents are important because they may save you money.

In general, it is best to bring in as many documents as you can find. Usually people bring in too little documentation.



Overall, the documentation covers:

### How much money you make or receive.

This information is at the core of the liability assessment. The system has been set up so that people who have more money pay more for their services.

### How much money you spend on medical debts.

If you make a great deal of money but also must spend much of it (on children, health care, etc.), these expenses are taken into account in the assessment process.

### Insurance information.

The type of health insurance you have may affect your liability.

## After the assessment

The liability technician has the task of balancing two important points. He or she wants to make the liability fair to you, and also to the taxpayers whose tax dollars pay for the services you don't have to pay for.

If you disagree with the liability found for you, you can request a review by the BH/DS Executive Director.

In extreme situations, there are ways to have the liability lessened or eliminated. This may be possible if you are deeply in debt, or are struck by a disaster such as a fire or flood.

It is important for you to report changes in your pay as soon as possible. Waiting to report pay changes only complicates matters. Sooner

or later, you will end up paying the same amount, whether or not you report the change right away.

## How often is an assessment done?

Assessments must be done at least once per year. If your income changes more than 5% (an increase or a decrease), you are responsible for making an appointment and having a new assessment done within thirty (30) days of the change.

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