

Frequently Asked Questions – CMS Price Transparency Requirements

Q. What are the CMS price transparency requirements?

A. CMS is requiring all hospitals to make public via the internet a list of their standard charges in a “machine readable” format on or before Jan. 1, 2019.

Q. What is the definition of “machine readable format” for purposes of the requirements?

A. Machine readable format is a digitally-accessible document in a format that can be easily imported or read into a computer system (e.g., XML, CSV). Files that are digitally accessible but cannot be easily imported or read into a computer system, like PDFs, do not qualify as a “machine readable format.”

Q. Do these requirements apply to all items and services provided by the hospital?

A. Yes, the current requirements apply to all items and services provided by the hospitals.

Q. What is SSM Health doing to meet this requirement by Jan. 1, 2019?

A. SSM Health will be posting all of our hospital charge master pricing (including pharmacy and DRG pricing) to our website for all hospital ministries by Jan. 1, 2019. This will not include pricing for services offered by SSM Health Medical Group and other non-hospital ministries. **Please note that this information indicates what we charge for services, rather than the amount we would receive in payment from a third party payor or patient.**

Q. Why did SSM Health put the same information on its website in two formats?

A. In order to meet the CMS requirement while ensuring our website remains user-friendly, identical pricing information will be available in two formats: one will be machine readable, and the other will remain in a line-item format that will show individual charge master line items as well as the charge by ministry. The machine readable format cannot be understood without importing the information into another computer and software. This is a CMS requirement, but it is not at all consumer-friendly. SSM Health is taking the additional step to offer pricing in a user-friendly format that makes it more accessible to our patients.

Q. What if I get questions about our pricing from a patient?

A. Our preference is for all patients to talk to our Price Transparency team to understand SSM Health’s pricing and what the patient may owe. The Price Transparency team has experts that can answer all questions related to pricing and are able to give our patients a good estimate of what their out-of-pocket costs will be. The team can be accessed at 844-989-6292 or at <https://www.ssmhealth.com/for-patients/pay-my-bill/price-estimate>.

Q. What if I get questions about our pricing from the media or other constituents?

A. Our charges are based on both market pricing (competitor hospitals) and our costs to deliver the service. Hospital charge data does not reflect consumers’ out-of-pocket costs, nor does it signify what we get paid by insurance companies or Medicare and Medicaid. In many cases, individual hospital charges may not be comparable because of bundling or different charging practices. We always recommend that consumers get upfront pricing whenever they can to compare their anticipated out-of-pocket costs and get the best value. **Please forward all questions/requests from the media to our internal public relations department.**