

ALERT:

New State Law Adds Patient Protections for Healthcare Billing

Overwhelming medical debt can push consumers and families into poverty and cause wage garnishment, bankruptcy or ruined credit.

Effective July 1, 2021 the New Mexico Patients Debt Collection Practices Act created several new requirements for healthcare providers, debt buyers, and collection agencies that collect medical debt.

The new requirements include:

- Health care facilities and medical debt collectors cannot continue collection actions (including lawsuits and garnishment) against low-income patients (defined as those making less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level).
- Health care facilities must take the following steps before collecting a bill from a patient:
 - Verify whether a patient has any health insurance;
 - If the patient is uninsured, screen the patient for all available public insurance and any other financial assistance that might cover the bill;
 - Help the patient apply for the assistance.
- Hospitals must post costs of procedures online, provide more information on bills and provide receipts for payments.

For more information:

NM Together for Healthcare, “Governor signs medical-debt protections into law”

<https://nmtogether4health.org/media-press/governor-signs-medical-debt-protections-into-law/>

New Mexico Statutes Sections 57-32-1 to 57-32-10 (NMSA 1978)

Ch. 57, art. 32 NMSA 1978, <https://nmonesource.com/nmos/nmsa/en/item/4423/index.do#!b/a32>

Senate Bill 71- Patient’s Debt Collection Protection Act

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?Chamber=S&LegType=B&LegNo=71&year=21>

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