



Volunteer Care



What is Volunteer Care?

Millions of people struggle with access to affordable medical care. Many physicians, dentists, and other medical professionals want to meet this need. Volunteer Care provides the legal framework to help these doctors volunteer their talents to benefit individuals in their community, while also providing incentives for further care. The program is run by volunteers and administered through the state.



Doctors can already volunteer their time, so why is this necessary?

Although it is true that doctors can currently volunteer, they often do so at great risk. One frivolous lawsuit could end a doctor's livelihood and destroy all that he or she has worked for. Volunteer Care is important because it encourages doctors to volunteer while also shielding them from litigation without merit. When doctors know they are protected, they are more likely to give back to their community, and the uninsured benefit.



How is the program administered?

The state's Department of Health is granted maximum flexibility to administer and monitor the program. In Florida, the Department of Health maintains the contracts between the state and participating medical professionals. Administration of the program in Florida is provided within existing departmental resources and costs less than \$500,000 each year. In Kansas, health care providers enter into agreement with the Secretary of Health and Environment to provide charitable services to indigent patients. Kansas is also able to administer the program within existing resources.



Can our state afford this program?

Volunteer Care is a great value to states. It allows doctors to provide free care to some of their community's poorest citizens and states only have to pay minimal administrative costs. In Florida, every \$1 spent on administration generated \$600 dollars in free care. In just four years, low-income patients received \$1.3 billion in free care, but the state spent roughly just \$500,000 a year.



Does the legal protection for doctors put the poor at risk?

Doctors enter the medical profession because they want to help people, and they take a sacred oath to do just that. Medical care should always be provided safely. The legal protection provided is the same that is extended to state employees in connection with their work; and, just like state employees, medical professionals are still liable if they are grossly negligent or commit willful misconduct in the course of providing care. Florida's experience shows that the donated care is overwhelmingly safe. In the last six years, and after millions of free patient visits, there have only been two judgements/settlements.



Continuing Medical Education (CME) is important. Will Volunteer Care mean less training for doctors?

Continuing medical education is valuable because it provides an opportunity for doctors to expand their knowledge and skillset. The real-world experience gained through volunteerism provides the same benefits to doctors. Volunteer Care simply supplements CME. For each hour that a doctor invests in their community, they are rewarded with an hour of education credit, but the credits are capped. Doctors still receive the training that they need, but a public need is filled.



If these patients qualify for Medicaid, why do we need this program?

Medicaid is not a silver bullet. It does not guarantee access or timely appointments, and some people face restrictions due to their geographical location. Volunteer Care is extended to individuals earning incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty line, which exceeds the parameters of Medicaid. It also grants access to specialists and doctors in the local community that may not be available through Medicaid.