

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Requirements for Hospitals To Make Public a List of Their Standard Charges via the Internet

Q. What format is a hospital required to use to make public a list of their standard charges via the Internet?

A. The format is the hospital's choice as long as the information represents the hospital's current standard charges as reflected in its chargemaster.

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

A. The current requirements apply to all items and services provided by the hospital.

Q. Do the requirements restrict a hospital from posting quality information or additional price transparency information?

A. CMS encourages hospitals to undertake efforts to engage in consumer friendly communication of their charges to help patients understand what their potential financial liability might be for services they obtain at the hospital, and to enable patients to compare charges for similar services across hospitals. A hospital is not precluded from posting quality information or price transparency information in addition to its current standard charges in its chargemaster.

Q. What is the definition of "machine-readable" for purposes of the requirements?

A. By definition, machine readable format is a digitally accessible document but more narrowly defined to include only formats that can be easily imported/read into a computer system (e.g., XML, CSV). A PDF, on the other hand, can be a digitally accessible document but cannot be easily imported/read into a computer system.

Q. What hospitals are required to make public a list of their standard charges via the Internet?

A. In the FY 2015 IPPS/LTCH proposed rule and final rule (79 FR 28169 and 79 FR 50146, respectively), CMS noted that section 2718(e) of the Public Health Service Act, which was enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act, requires that each hospital operating within the United States, for each year, establish (and update) and make public (in accordance with guidelines developed by the Secretary) a list of the hospital's standard charges for items and services provided by the hospital. There are no hospitals operating within the United States with exemptions from this requirement under the current policy.

Q. Does participation in a state online price transparency initiative satisfy the federal requirements?

A. CMS is fully supportive of and encourages state price transparency initiatives. However, under the current guidelines, participation in an online state price transparency initiative does not exempt a hospital from the requirements.