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TO: Jeff Irwin, Chair  
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel  
County Administrator

FROM: Inmate Health Services Oversight Team

DATE: March 2, 2005

SUBJECT: Proposed Policy To Assess Inmate Fees For Selected Health Services

**BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

It is requested that the Board of Commissioners approve the attached policy to assess inmate fees for using selected health services. The Inmate Health Services Oversight Team has researched the policy and its implications, and offers the Commission the following information to support the policy.

**BACKGROUND:**

During the past ten years, increasing numbers of jails and prisons have implemented policies to assess inmate fees for the use of health services. The overarching objective has been to reduce the number of unnecessary health encounters, thereby managing the cost to provide inmate health care. Washtenaw County Jail conducted a survey of surrounding county jails in 2003, and determined that all eight counties were assessing inmate fees for non-emergency medical care at that time: Monroe, Kent, Bay, Jackson, Lenawee, Wexford, Clinton, and Macomb Counties.

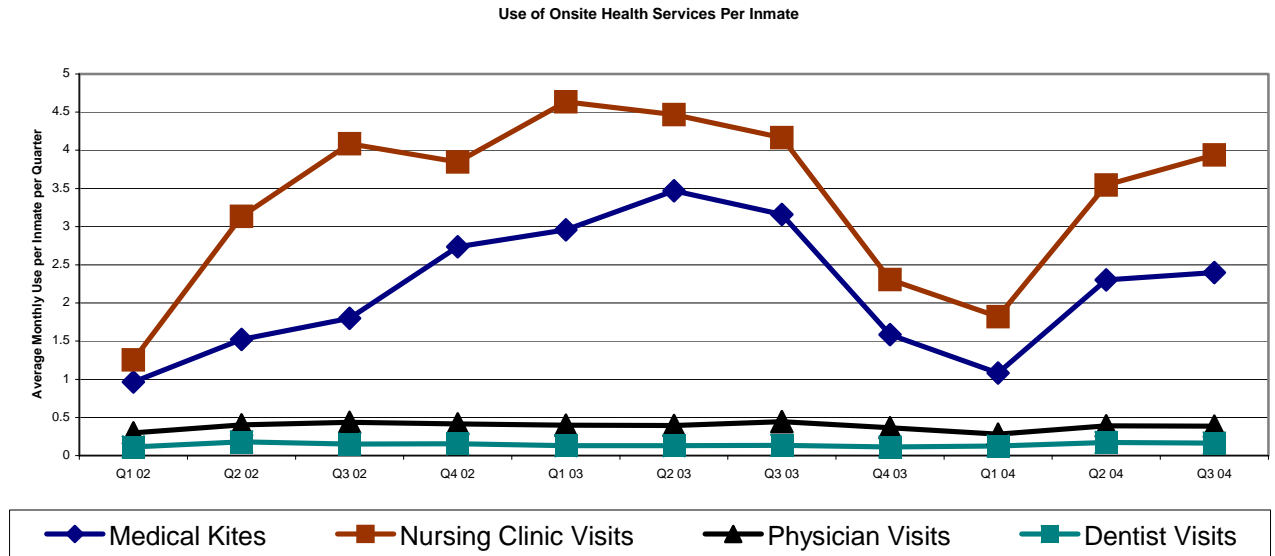
Presently, both major accrediting bodies, the National Commission on Correctional Health Services (NCCHC) and the American Correction Association (ACA), identify standards for health service fees. In addition, experience with fee policies has illustrated that upon implementation, there is an initial significant drop in use of services, which tapers to a modest, consistently lower use rate over the long term.

**DISCUSSION:**

At the Washtenaw County Jail, inmates request health services by submitting a "kite," or written request. Nursing staff triage the kites and schedule nursing, physician, or dental clinic visits as appropriate. No fees are assessed for any health service. Inmates can purchase limited numbers of selected over-the-counter medications through their commissary accounts.

The Oversight Committee has been tracking kites and clinic visits. The table below shows that physician and dentist visits per inmate per month are fairly stable, but the

number of kites and nursing visits are quite volatile. According to SecureCare, the Jail's health services contractor, which serves about 20 other jails in the Midwest, the number of kites and services at the Washtenaw County Jail is consistently higher than at other jails.



The Inmate Health Service Oversight Committee developed the proposed policy with the following goals:

Goals:

- To provide inmates with medically necessary health care services;
- To induce value in the use of elective and urgent health services;
- To provide access to health services in a manner similar to that which inmates will encounter after release; and
- To demonstrate fiscal responsibility in the use of public resources for inmate health services.

Considering inmate needs and the County's risk management, the following conditions are integrated into the policy:

- There will be no fees for mental health or substance abuse services;
- There will be no fees for prescription drugs at this time;
- If a nurse, physician or dentist requests to see an inmate for follow-up care, i.e., wound care, further assessment of acute illness, there will be no fees;
- Inmates with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, emphysema, etc. will not be assessed fees for medical care;
- Inmates with no funds in their commissary accounts will not be denied service; and
- The Oversight Team will track kites and use data, and report on the effect of this policy.

**IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:**

There would be no impact on Human Resources.

**IMPACT ON THE BUDGET:**

Although revenues will be generated by charging a fee the level is not know at this time and the recommendation is to monitor for six months before adjusting the budget.

**IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:**

There is no impact on indirect costs.

**IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:**

This policy represents collaboration among Community Support and Treatment Services (CSTS), Administration, Public Health, Inmate Services and a private contractor, SecureCare.

**CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:**

This request conforms to County policies.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attached you will find:

- Proposed policy

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE ATTACHED POLICY TO ASSESS INMATE FEES FOR USING SELECTED HEALTH SERVICES.

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 16, 2005

WHEREAS, health care costs continue to rise at an extremely high rate; and

WHEREAS, the County is obligated to provide health care services for all inmates in the County Jail; and

WHEREAS, the Inmate Health Services Oversight Team was created in June 2004 to review the health care being provided to inmates, to identify cost containment opportunities, and to review best practices from other jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the overarching objective from the review to date has been to reduce the number of unnecessary health encounters, thereby managing the cost of inmate health care provision; and

WHEREAS, the National Commission on Correctional Health Services (NCCHC) and the American Correction Association (ACA) maintain standards on inmate health fee policies as a means to limit such unnecessary health encounters; and

WHEREAS, these standards and experience with fee policies in other jurisdictions have illustrated that upon implementation of a health care fee for inmates, there is an initial significant drop in use of services, which tapers to a modest, consistently lower use rate over the long term; and

WHEREAS, the oversight team recommends a new fee policy be created in Washtenaw County with the following conditions:

- There will be no fees for mental health or substance abuse services;
- There will be no fees for prescription drugs at this time;
- If a nurse, physician or dentist requests to see an inmate for follow-up care, i.e., wound care, further assessment of acute illness, etc., there will be no fees;
- Inmates with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, emphysema, etc. will not be assessed fees for medical care;
- Inmates with no funds in their commissary accounts will not be denied service;
- The Oversight Team will track kites and use data, and report on the effect of this policy; and

WHEREAS, this matter has been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, the Finance Department, Human Resources, the County Administrator's Office and the Ways & Means Committee.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby approves the creation of the new inmate health care fee policy as attached hereto and made a part hereof.

## **Inmate Medical Co-Payment Policy**

**Authority:**

Public Act Number 15 of 1982 authorizes County jails to charge inmates for reasonable medical care.

**Policy:**

The Washenaw County Jail is committed to providing comprehensive, high quality health care. As a governmental agency we are expected to maintain cost effective services, and encourage the appropriate use of medical services. Therefore, beginning April 1, 2005, we shall require all inmates to contribute a nominal co-pay fee for specific medical services. No inmate shall be denied medical care due to a lack of ability to pay for services.

At intake, all inmates shall be required to read (or have read to them if they cannot read) the medical co-pay rules. The inmate shall then sign the acknowledgment stating he/she has been informed of the co-pay rules. If the inmate refuses to sign the acknowledgment, the booking officer as well as the medical staff will sign confirming the inmate's advisement of this procedure.

**Co-Pays will be required for the following services:**

Over-the-counter medications, including but not limited to:

Acetaminophen	\$ 0.50
Ibuprofen	\$ 0.50
Sudafed	\$ 0.50
Alka-Seltzer	\$ 0.60
Orange Metamucil	\$ 0.60
Rolaids	\$ 1.31
Hydrocortisone Cream	\$ 1.99
Anti-Fungal Cream	\$ 2.10
Contact Lens Case	\$ 2.26
Nurse Visit	\$ 3.00
Saline Solution	\$ 3.36
Effergrip	\$ 4.49
Doctor Visit	\$ 10.00
Dentist Visit -	\$ 10.00

\* Co-pay deductions shall be made immediately from an inmate's account after receiving over-the-counter medication(s) or medical services. Should an inmate run a negative balance, the co-pay shall be reimbursed before any commissary purchases are made, if money is deposited into the inmate's commissary account.

**Co-payment will not be required for the following services:**

- Initial medical screening done in the booking area upon intake;
- Physicals done as part of the fourteen-day assessment;
- Chronic medical condition, including but not limited to diabetes, pregnancy, asthma, high blood pressure;
- Follow up visits required by the physician/nurse;
- Mental health evaluations or counseling;
- Any medical or psychiatric emergency.

**Medical Services:**

- A. In order to assure the proper administration of medical care for all inmates, the Sheriff has contracted with SecureCare to provide a jail physician as well as on-duty nursing staff. These individuals have been granted the authority and responsibility for overseeing all medical care of those incarcerated in the Washtenaw County Jail. Inmates shall submit a Request for Medical Care form for any medical treatment or medication.
- B. In the event of a medical emergency, inmates shall summon a correctional officer immediately.
- C. Inmates who have requested medical attention shall cooperate in their prescribed treatment by following the instructions of the physician and/or nurse.
- D. Should a nurse refer an inmate to physician assessment or treatment, fee for the nurse's visit shall be waived and the inmate shall only be charged for the physician's visit.
- E. All questions, concerns, and complaints related to medical care shall be addressed to the Clinical Administrator.