



Florida Sheriffs Association Position on Containing Jail Medical Costs

The Florida Sheriffs Association (FSA) wants to ensure that inmate medical expenses are paid for by the appropriate individuals and that the public is not penalized by paying higher taxes to cover unnecessary treatment costs.

Without a statutory cap or a contract negotiated between the medical care provider and the county detention facility, taxpayers end up responsible for paying full fee rates to providers for a person who would otherwise receive indigent rates.

Currently, if no agreement or contract exists between a hospital and a county detention facility, the hospital can bill the county's general fund "usual and customary rates" for medical services provided to inmates or arrestees. Usual and customary rates go far beyond what individuals actually pay for medical services, often exceeding 300 percent of the actual cost. Yet Sheriffs and local governments have a Constitutional obligation to ensure that these inmates and pretrial detainees receive necessary medical services.

The state Department of Corrections pays 110% of Medicare for all inmate medical care, treatment, hospitalization and transportation, and up to 125% in cases that the medical provider has documented a negative operating margin with the Agency for Health Care Administration. When the legislature capped state prisoner medical expenses, the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability projected a 2.5 percent savings of more than \$10 million during the first year. Florida's Sheriffs and local governments are asking the legislature for the same equitable consideration in the reimbursement of such medical costs.

Emergency Room physicians would be exempt from the fiscal cap because they do not have the ability to negotiate agreements outside the scope of the statute and are often under a federal mandate to treat and stabilize the inmate or arrestee.

To reduce the burden on taxpayers, the Florida Sheriffs Association supports containing jail medical costs.

