

A

Affordable Care Act aka Obama Care – a health care law passed in 2010 that expanded access to health insurance, provided financial assistance to help lower insurance costs for some individuals and families, expanded Medicaid eligibility in many states, and included efforts to reduce overall health care costs.

Alimony – financial support that a court orders one spouse to pay to the other during or after a divorce.

B

Balance Billing – when a health care provider bills you for the difference between what your insurance pays and the provider’s full charge.

C

Chargemaster or Charge Description Master – a hospital’s full list of prices for medical services, procedures, tests, supplies, and medications.

Charity Care – is free care or discounted care given to patients who are unable to pay based on established financial assistance policies by the hospital.

Co-pay – A fixed amount you pay for a covered health care service after you’ve paid your deductible (if you have one).

Credit report or Consumer Report or Credit Record – a record of your borrowing and payment history, including debts, loans, and some public records like bankruptcies or court judgments.

Credit Reporting Agency or Credit Bureau – a business that maintains historical credit information on individuals and businesses. They receive reports from lenders and various other sources which are compiled in a credit report that includes a credit score when issued. The 3 majors are Experian, TransUnion and Equifax)

Creditor – a person, company, or business that you owe money to.

D

Debt Collection Company or Debt Collector – Under the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act or “FDCPA,” the term “debt collector” applies to collection agencies and lawyers (or their employees) that are collecting debts for others. In Tennessee, debt collectors must be licensed.

Deductible – the amount you must pay for health care services before your insurance starts paying. With a \$2,000 deductible, for example, you pay the first \$2,000 of covered services yourself.

Dependent – a person who relies on someone else for financial support, such as a child supported by their parents.

Disability Benefits – a type of insurance product that provides income in the event that a policyholder is prevented from working and earning an income due to a disability

E

Explanation of Benefits (EOB) – The EOB provides details about a medical insurance claim that has been processed and explains what portion was paid to the health care provider and what portion of the payment, if any, the patient must pay.

F

Federal Poverty Guidelines or Federal Poverty Levels (FPL) – income limits set by the U.S. government to help determine who qualifies for certain programs, benefits, or financial assistance. These guidelines are updated each year to account for inflation.

Financial Assistance Policy – Hospital care that is needed for a person's health and provided to someone who cannot afford to pay when:

- their health insurance coverage, if any, has run out.
- they are unable to pay for their care including deductibles or coinsurance costs
- they do not have the financial resources to pay for their care.

For-Profit Hospital – a hospital run as a business to make money for its owners or investors

G

Garnishment – when money is taken from your paycheck or other income to pay a debt you owe.

Gross Income – the total amount of money you earn before taxes or other deductions are taken out.

M

Medicaid – Insurance program that provides free or low-cost health coverage to some low-income people, families and children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. In Tennessee, Medicaid is called TennCare.

Medical Billing – the process of using medical service codes to send health care charges to an insurance company for payment.

Medical Coding – the process of turning medical diagnoses, treatments, and services into standardized codes used for billing and insurance purposes.

Medical Indigence – when a person cannot afford to pay for their medical care.

Medicare – A federal health insurance program for people 65 and older and certain younger people with disabilities. It also covers people with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD).

N

Non-profit Hospital – a hospital that does not operate to make a profit and does not pay certain taxes. Money earned is put back into the hospital and its services instead of being paid to owners or shareholders.

R

Retirement Account – a savings account or plan that helps people set aside money for retirement.

S

Social Security Benefits – monthly payments made by the government to some retirees, people with disabilities, and certain family members.

T

TennCare – the name of Tennessee's Medicaid program