Waiver for Copays and Deductibles in School–Based Clinics

What is the waiver?

Current insurance law forbids any provider to bill insurance if they did not first collect a copay or deductible (it's a contract requirement between insurance companies and providers). However, Colorado law, specifically Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 18-13-119, states that deductibles and copayments for health care services **can** be waived if delivered at a school-based clinic. The waiver exempts school-based clinics from requiring the collection of copays or deductibles while still allowing them to bill insurance. There is no formal "waiver" process, form, or application. This is simply an exemption that school-based clinics can elect to take if they wish.

Why is this important?

When school-based clinics waive the copay or deductible, they remove a barrier and patients have more access to health services they need. This can reduce logistical challenges of collecting payment when youth attend appointments without a guardian present. Clinics can still bill insurance for a visit even if the copay or deductible wasn't collected.

Some school-based clinics find that copayments and deductibles are an important revenue source and choose to collect them. Others find that the administrative burden is not worthwhile and elect to take the waiver.

How does this work in the clinic?

School-based clinics should write into their operating policies and procedures whether they want to collect copayments or deductibles, and how they will manage patient interactions and billing processes.

School-based clinics run by federally-qualified health centers should check with their operating organization about how to manage their sliding fee scale. Some clinics in this system elect to scale down to $0 to take the exemption. Please check in with your organization or Colorado Community Health Network for more information.