**Creating dental sliding fee scales (SFS)**

**What is the difference between required, additional, and specialty dental services as defined by HRSA?**

**Required:** Preventive dental services prevent diseases of the oral cavity and related structures.  
At a minimum, these services include all of the following:  
• basic dental screenings and recommendations for preventive intervention;  
• oral hygiene instruction and related oral health education (e.g., prevention of oral trauma and oral cancer);  
• oral prophylaxis, as necessary; and  
• topical application of fluorides (e.g., fluoride varnishes) and the prescription of fluorides for systemic use when not available in the water supply.  
Services may include application of sealants, and diagnostic screening for caries and periodontal disease through the use of dental x-rays.

Think: cleanings, general dental exams, oral health education, sealants, fluoride applications, general x-rays looking for caries or periodontal disease

**Additional:** Restorative dental services are basic services at a general practice level to diagnose and treat disease, injury, or impairment in teeth and associated structures of the oral cavity and include any diagnostic x-rays or imaging.  
These services may include: fillings and single unit crowns; non-surgical-endodontics, extractions, periodontal therapies, bridges or dentures.

Think: fillings, crowns, extractions, periodontal care, bridges, dentures, non-surgical endodontics, advanced x-rays (e.g., panorama views)

**Specialty:** Complex dental services (e.g., oral surgery, surgical endodontics, orthodontics) are considered specialty services.

**How can you set dental fees?**

**Remember:** All services within the health center’s scope of services (i.e., those services listed on your Form 5a) must be offered on a sliding fee scale and have a nominal fee for people with incomes less than 100% FPL. This is true for required, additional, and specialty services if they are listed on your Form 5a.

Dental fees can have different SFS than other categories of service (e.g., medical or behavioral health). You can also have different SFS for different categories of dental services – required, additional, and specialty.

**The professional services of the dentist** should be charged based on sliding fee discount schedule and nominal fee for that service.

**What can you charge for ‘supplies and equipment’?**

This refers to service-related supplies and equipment related to, but not included in, an underlying professional service as part of the prevailing standard of care (*e.g.*, dentures, crowns, etc., with restorative dental services).

If your center center provides supplies and equipment and charges patients for those items separately, the health center must inform patients of out-of-pocket costs “prior to the time of service”.

Your center has discretion to determine how to charge patients for such supplies and equipment – examples include: at cost, at discount, on a sliding fee discount.

**For supplies and equipment, HRSA’s primary focus is on patient notification of out-of-pocket costs in advance of services – not how center charges for items.**

Recommendations for charging for supplies and equipment:

–Advisable to reflect a discount from locally prevailing charges

–Should establish procedures to reduce payments or provide payment plans as necessary to ensure access

–Can ask for “up-front” payments to cover the lab costs for the supplies/equipment if care is not denied if patient does not have the payment

–Can “delay” procedure until you have collected a portion of costs, subject to clinical urgency and standards of care

**Dental lab fees can be charged separately from what a patient will need to pay for dental services on a sliding fee scale.**

**Resources:**

1. HRSA Form 5a Service Descriptors: <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bphc/compliance/form-5a-service-descriptors.pdf>
2. Feldesman Tucker Leifer Fidell, The Sliding Fee Discount Program series, Parts I, II, and III; presented by Marcie Zakheim
3. NNOHA, Operations Manual for Health Center Oral Health Programs, <https://cchn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NNOHA-Dental-Operations-Manual.pdf>