

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Local Health Department Billing for Sexually Transmitted Disease

1. When do local health departments (LHDs) have the ability to charge for HIV testing?

LHDs that routinely bill insurance companies or other third party payers for service may bill for an HIV-related test if the person requesting the test does not request anonymity. No person may be refused a test at a LHD due to a lack of insurance or due to a request to remain anonymous.

2. If a patient reports to a LHD for STD testing and does not want their insurance to be billed, does the LHD have the ability to charge a cash amount for services received, such as nursing time?

Yes, it is allowable to charge for these services, unless the patient is indigent or does not have the ability to pay for services.

3. If a person wants confidential STD testing but has insurance, can that person have a free test, or can the LHD charge for the test and supplies?

LHDs currently receive some free supplies for collecting specimens and the ability to send them to the Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) for testing. As long as the LHD is utilizing free materials for testing given to them with federal or state grant money, they cannot mandate a payment for this testing if the patient is unwilling to use their insurance for payment.

4. Does the LHD have the ability to charge for the lab's supplies used to collect specimens for HIV or STD testing?

No. When a private healthcare provider bills insurance, they may bill for the service provided. They do not bill for each individual piece of equipment used in testing or treatment. For example, when billing for an immunization, it is a flat fee. There is no separate charge for needles, alcohol wipes, bandages, etc. It is bundled into one fee submitted to insurance.

5. Can insurance be billed for nurses' time on STD testing or is that free?

If a patient reports for testing without counseling or other services provided then you could not bill for an encounter. However, if counseling or other services are provided at the time of that encounter and it is properly documented in the patient's chart, then you may bill for that encounter.

6. How much can LHDs charge for STD or HIV testing?

LHDs may charge in accordance with their existing fee schedules and may charge patients for such testing on a sliding fee scale.

7. Can LHDs bill insurances for testing patients with free supplies given to them from the state lab or would we have to purchase private supplies to be able to bill for that service?

If they are using free specimen collection supplies from OLS they cannot bill for those supplies and would need to purchase their own. They can bill for the nurses time to provide the service.

8. If the LHD bills for this service, can the LHD still send the specimen to the state lab to test or does the LHD need an account set up with a different lab?

If using OLS supplies they should submit those specimens to OLS for testing.

9. Can LHDs refuse to provide HIV testing if the patient is unwilling to provide personal information or proof of insurance?

No person may be refused a test at a LHD due to a request to remain anonymous.

Additional information regarding this legislative change is available at:

http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Status/bills_text.cfm?billdoc=SB404 SUB1 ENR.htm&yr=2016&sesstype=RS&billtype=B&houseorig=S&i=404