

Frequently Asked Questions about the 2015 National Survey of Free & Charitable Clinics

Why are you doing this study?

Surprisingly little is known about free and charitable clinics. And, what is known is out-of-date or based on a small number of clinics. In the face of this lack of information, myths and misconceptions about the sector persist.

This survey is a systematic effort to address this lack of information and collect up-to-date comprehensive data about free and charitable clinics nationwide to inform the discussion about the contribution free and charitable clinics make to the safety net. In an era of greater accountability, the survey data will provide answers to questions being asked by funders, policymakers, community residents, and other partners in the safety net. Timely data is needed now more than ever because of all the recent changes that have occurred in our health system and across the sector. New care delivery models, such as charitable clinics and hybrid clinics, have proliferated. Our ability to monitor these changes and describe the sector's response has been limited because of the lack of data. This survey seeks to remedy this deficit and provide this much-needed information.

Who is getting the questionnaire?

All known free and charitable clinics will be invited to participate in the survey. For the purposes of the survey, the following definitions apply:

- **Free Clinic:** The nonprofit clinic provides all goods and services at **no charge** directly to uninsured and/or underserved patients. "Services" include medical, dental, mental health/behavioral health, and/or medications. Clinic may request or suggest donations. Clinic does not bill any third-party payers, including Medicaid, Medicare, or commercial insurers. Clinic may be bricks-and-mortar clinic or mobile unit.
- **Charitable Clinic:** The nonprofit clinic provides goods and/or services for a **fee** directly to uninsured and/or underserved patients. "Services" include medical, dental, mental health/behavioral health, and/or medications. Clinic may use a flat fee or sliding fee scale. Payment from the patient is expected at the time of service, and may or may not be waived if the patient has no ability to pay. Clinic may bill patients but does not bill third-party payers, including Medicaid, Medicare, or commercial insurers. Clinic may be bricks-and-mortar clinic or mobile unit.
- **Hybrid Clinic:** The clinic is a free clinic or charitable clinic as defined above, except that it also **bills one or more third-party payers**, such as Medicaid, Medicare, or commercial insurers. Clinic has not been designated as a Federally-Qualified Health Center (FQHC), FQHC Look-Alike, or Rural Health Clinic.
- **Free/Charitable Pharmacy:** The licensed pharmacy dispenses free or low-cost medications directly to uninsured and/or underserved patients.

In addition, you can help us identify the population of free and charitable clinics by telling us about the free and charitable clinics you know about in your state.

As you know, free and charitable clinics can be quite different from one another. Thus, for this survey to be successful, we need to hear from all types of clinics.

What information is being collected, and how?

Question topics include clinic characteristics, patients served, staff and volunteers, services provided, cost of care, quality and health information technology, impact of the Affordable Care Act, and future plans. The survey is estimated to take about 25 to 45 minutes to answer all questions. It will be helpful to have your 2014 financial data and statistical report handy when you sit down to complete the survey. The survey can be filled out in one sitting or can be stopped in the middle and restarted again at a later time; if you pause the survey, all your responses are saved automatically, and the survey will resume where you left off.

How will the information be used?

Everything you tell us is confidential. Results will be reported only in aggregate form (at national and state levels) with no information identifying any responding clinics.

The information we get from you will be used to describe the free and charitable clinic sector. For example, we will be able to describe the sector as a whole, compare free clinics versus charitable clinics, and examine clinics in Medicaid expansion states versus non-expansion states. Some clinics may recall filling out a similar national survey in 2005-2006. We will link the data from the previous 2005-2006 national survey with the current 2015 national survey so that we can describe trends over time.

Can I get a copy of the survey results?

Yes. Analyzing the data and compiling the results will take several months but we will be distributing the results through multiple venues. We will share preliminary results during the NAFC 2015 Charitable Health Care Symposium in Palm Springs, CA on October 25-27, 2015. The study's sponsors, AmeriCares and the National Association of Free & Charitable Clinics, also will be posting study results on their websites, www.safetynetcenter.org and www.nafcclinics.org, respectively. We also expect to publish our findings in the peer-reviewed literature. Please contact Julie Darnell (see contact information below) for additional information.

Are there any incentives for participating?

Responding clinics will be entered in a drawing for a chance to win one of:

- 4 Southwest Airlines round-trip tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S.;
- 5 memberships for the National Association of Free & Charitable Clinics; or
- 1 round-trip airfare to attend the NAFC 2015 Charitable Health Care Symposium in Palm Springs, CA on October 25-27, 2015.

Drawings will be held monthly. Your chances of winning are greater if you respond early!

Who is supporting this survey?

AmeriCares (with a grant from the General Electric Foundation) and the National Association of Free Clinics are sponsoring this survey. In addition, as of July 1, 2015, the following organizations have endorsed participation the survey.

Arkansas Association of Charitable Clinics • Association of Clinicians for the Underserved • California Association of Free & Charitable Clinics • Christian Community Health Fellowship • ClinicNET • Empowering Community Health Outreach • Free Clinic Association of Pennsylvania • Georgia Charitable Care Network • Free Clinics of Iowa • Free Clinics of Michigan • Florida Association of Free & Charitable Clinics • Illinois Association of Free & Charitable Clinics • Missouri Association of Free & Charitable Clinics • Mobile Health Clinics Association • North Carolina Association of Free Clinics • Ohio Association of Free Clinics • Oklahoma Charitable Clinic Association • South Carolina Free Clinic Association • Tennessee Charitable Care Network • Texas Association of Charitable Clinics • Vermont Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured • Virginia Association of Free & Charitable Clinics • Volunteers in Medicine • Washington Healthcare Access Alliance • West Virginia Association of Free Clinics • Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics

Who do I contact if I have further questions?

If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please contact:

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If you believe your clinic does not qualify for this study, kindly let us know!