



Fire Department

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February 12, 2013

Alderman Terry Witkowski, Chair  
Members of the Public Safety Committee  
City Hall, Room 205  
200 E. Wells St.  
Milwaukee WI 53202

RE: EMS Collections Update

Dear Alderman Witkowski and Members of the Public Safety Committee:

This is a communication to inform members of the Council that the Milwaukee Fire Department has contracted with a collections company and, in March of 2013, will begin collections of delinquent Advanced Life Support (ALS) treatment/transport accounts.

The Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) has billed for ALS treatments and transports to hospitals since 2006. From that time to the present, the City has accrued several million dollars of uncollected revenue from those services. The Public Safety Committee directed the MFD [files 090697 and 100221] to pursue collections of these accounts.

In the summer of 2011 MFD personnel began extensive research into the collections of unpaid medical bills, which is a very specific type of collections with unique bylaws and rules. By the end of 2011, the MFD had compiled a list of requirements and completed its draft of an "RFP for Medical Collections" which was submitted to City Purchasing by January of 2012.

An evaluation team made up of members from the City Attorney's Office, the City Comptroller's Office, the Budget Office and the MFD completed a very thorough and detailed process under the guidance of City Purchasing choosing Harris & Harris Collections late last fall.

Before the actual transfer of patient records to collections could begin, several additional legal documents had to be written and agreed upon. These included but were not limited to:

- Two business agreements with the collections company and the billing company that indemnify the City under HIPAA regulations.
- The creation of a write-off policy in compliance with federal regulations that protects low income people from being pursued.
- A standard operating guideline agreed upon by all three parties for the transfer of patient accounts from billing to collections.

The billing company, A DPI Intermedix, worked with the MFD on the legalities of the write-off policy, advanced notification to patients, and explanations on how customers could apply for financial hardship if they felt they qualified.

Test transfers of patient records have already begun. The MFD's goal is to get the full process into motion during the first half of the month of March. A notice is being sent to customers warning them in advance of the collections process. The notice directs them to call the billing company if they need to make payment arrangements or apply for hardship exemptions before going to collections. Based on the billing company's previous experience with other municipalities undergoing the same process, they expect there will be a significant number of calls from customers.

The MFD is preparing a list of speaking points to be forwarded to Council members for their reference when constituents call them.

Sincerely,

  
MARK ROHLFING  
Chief

MR/cf