**History of Indigent Health Care Funding**

The publicly owned Manatee Memorial Hospital was sold in 1984, to a private Not-for-Profit Hospital. An agreement to reimburse for eligible services to qualified individuals was entered into on July 25, 1984 between the County and Manatee Hospitals and Health Systems. The Hospital was subsequently sold to a For-Profit Hospital Corporation, with terms of the Agreement remaining intact.

The sale of Manatee Memorial Hospital was authorized by Chapter 83-463, Laws of Florida ("Special Act"), which requires that the proceeds of the sale and any interest be used for the health care of residents of Manatee County who are Medically Indigent and the health care needs of the residents of Manatee County as are determined by the Board of County Commissioners.

Federal Laws require hospitals to provide care to individuals experiencing urgent and/or life threatening medical circumstances regardless of the ability of such individuals to pay for services. Manatee County decided to apply measured and reasonable financial resources to assist local physicians and hospitals in their mission to render urgent life sustaining and medically necessary medical care to the residents of Manatee County. The Manatee County Health Care System was created to provide monies for indigent care and other health-related purposes within Manatee County.

The proceeds from the 1984 sale (the “Corpus”) generated interest which was used in the following manner to provide indigent health care in Manatee County:

- **75%** of the interest to Manatee Memorial Hospital and physicians to treat indigent persons at the Hospital facility.
- For an approximate 10 year time period (1990-2000) **5%** of the interest was deposited back into the Corpus, with **70%** of the interest available to the Hospital and physicians.
- **25%** of the interest to the Health Care Trust Fund (or 25% Fund) for various community health-related purposes such as construction and renovation projects at the Health Department, Manatee Glens and Rural Health Services.
- At another point **10%** of the 75% interest was made available to the Health Department to provide out-patient primary care and obstetrical care. These funds were later sub-contracted by the Health Department to Rural Health Services, and later received directly by Rural Health via contract with the County.
- At another point **10%** of the 75% interest was made available specifically for the physicians.

Funds for indigent healthcare services have been, and continue to be drawn from General Revenue and from the Manatee County Health Care Fund.

**Health Care Fund and uses**

The **Health Care Advisory Committee (HCAC)** was created as part of Manatee County Ordinance 84-16 at the time of the sale of the County owned Manatee Memorial Hospital. The
HCAC was comprised of 9 citizens appointed by the Board, and usually met when a request for funding was made by a community health care provider.

The primary focus of the HCAC was to make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on uses of the amounts in the General Health Care Fund.

The General Health Care Fund was also known as the 25% Fund, as it was comprised of 25% of the interest from the proceeds of the sale of the Hospital.

Recommendations were made for numerous community health-related purposes, including construction and renovation projects at the Health Department, Manatee Glens and Rural Health Services; equipment purchases at the Manatee Blood Center and Manatee Glens; and program expenditures such as Marchman Act Services and Inpatient Detoxification Services at Manatee Glens.

The HCAC sunset in 2008 with the dissolution of the use of separate percentages (as noted above) of the Health Care funds.

In 2005, the Board also decided to form a Health Care Access Task Force (HCATF) to complement and build upon the work of the HCAC, and more actively work on indigent health care issues for a period of 1-2 years. The Task Force was established to study and make recommendations to the Board with respect to ways of improving the health care delivery system for indigent residents of Manatee County.

Comprised of ten members, eight appointed by the Board and two appointed by the County Administrator. Membership was comprised of an Attorney, Education representatives, Health Care Providers, Physicians, and Citizens. Approximately 10 meetings were held each year over a 4-year time period with recommendations presented to the Board of County Commissioners. Upon completion of their work, the HCATF sunset in 2009.

2008 agreement and expanded use of funds

Effective June 1, 2008, the Board repealed Manatee County Ordinances (84-16, 90-63, 00-54, 01-18, and 04-79) which collectively had provided for the distribution of the Health Care funds and interest from the sale of the Hospital. The decision to repeal was due to the fact that these existing health care ordinances were constructed based upon the terms of sale of the County owned hospital in 1984, and the terms had outlived their meaningful life.

At this time, the Board also adopted Manatee County Ordinance 08-26 and Manatee County Resolution 08-134 which created the Manatee County Health Care Fund. The Health Care Fund includes all proceeds from the sale of Manatee Memorial Hospital and all interest generated by these proceeds. Other separate Trust Funds (the Special Health Care Fund, the Reimbursement Fund and the General Health Care Fund) for the Corpus and the Interest were dissolved effective June 1, 2008 and October 1, 2008, with funds transferred to the newly created Manatee County Health Care Fund.
This Fund was then used to make payments in accordance with the Manatee County Hospital and Hospital-Based Physician Indigent Health Care Program, and expenditures for other health care purposes as approved by the Board.

Funding for provision of indigent health care was expanded to include Blake Medical Center, and Lakewood Ranch Medical Center. The Board wished to continue the provision of assistance to medically indigent residents of Manatee County, and agreements were developed to provide an annual appropriation to a Manatee County Hospital and Hospital-Based Physician Indigent Health Care Program.

The Hospital and Hospital-Based Physician Indigent Healthcare Program and accompanying Agreements between the County and 1) Manatee Memorial Hospital (MMH), 2) Lakewood Ranch Medical Center (LWR), and 3) Blake Medical Center (BMC) were approved June 1, 2008. The Agreements described the criteria to determine an individual's eligibility for indigent health care assistance, the services which were eligible, reporting requirements and payment procedures for the participating hospitals and the participating physicians.

The County’s Agreement to pay area hospitals for care to qualifying Manatee County residents included: 1) Inpatient hospital services (with psychiatric care limited to a 72 hour stabilization period per patient per year); 2) Outpatient hospital services (consisting of ambulatory surgery, preadmission diagnostic testing, chemotherapy, IV therapy and emergency room care); and 3) Services rendered by attendant physicians at area hospitals (and up to 3 follow up visits in their offices) corresponding to 1 and 2 above.

2011 hospital ‘grant’ application process and current agreement

With the passage of time, the County identified a need for a more streamlined approach to administering indigent health care funding agreements, decreasing staff time both for the County and for the Clerk of the Circuit Court. This approach was in keeping with the intent that funds be used for the County’s healthcare needs, while allowing the hospital facilities to present customized approaches to meet those needs. The Hospitals were invited to submit Indigent Health Care proposals to the County, with submission in March 2011. On June 21, 2011, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution R-11-151, approving the current Hospital Agreements between the County and 1) MMH/LWR, and 2) BMC. The Agreements provide funding for a three (3) year time period, October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2014. The funding for the Hospitals assists them to offset increased operating costs and decreased reimbursements. Blake Medical Center has also opened a Level 2 trauma center, increasing eligible patients served.

Manatee County residents with limited income, limited assets, are uninsured or underinsured, and have no other medical benefits available to them are served by the Hospitals under these Agreements. Those earning less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible, increased from the previous 135% FPL. Many in our community have incomes that disqualify them from government programs, but also have no health insurance available to them. The current unemployment rate and decrease in employer funded insurance plans has resulted in more residents without adequate insurance coverage.

Physicians are reimbursed for treating indigent persons at the Hospital facility, and for up to three (3) follow-up visits in the physician office. These physician billing procedures require the resources of County staff. A Request for Proposal was issued for the services of a third party administrator (TPA) medical billing company to administer participating physician payments.
However, the proposed additional costs of this approach were determined to be cost prohibitive. A software program is being used by County staff to assist with the physician billing activities.

A history of the above activities is provided through Manatee County Ordinances 84-16, 90-63, 00-54, 01-18, 04-79, and 08-26 and Resolutions 08-134 and 11-151.

Community initiatives
Manatee Healthcare Study
In 2007, the University of South Florida (USF), Center for Research in Healthcare Systems and Policy and Institute for Public Policy and Leadership entered into an Agreement with the Manatee Chamber Foundation to undertake a health care study in Manatee County. The aims of this study were to assess 1) the health care delivery system, 2) challenges to the Manatee County health care system, 3) health care resources, and 4) health care organizing and financing. Funding for the study was provided through the Manatee County Healthcare Fund. The 2008 Manatee Healthcare Study Report is available on-line at Manateechamber.com.

Manatee Chamber Healthcare Committee
In 2009, the Manatee Chamber of Commerce formed a Healthcare Committee to address issues and implement recommendations from the 2008 Manatee County Healthcare Study. These included: Formation of a community-based Healthcare Alliance, pursuit of a teaching/residency program at a hospital(s) in Manatee County, removal of barriers to attracting and retaining physicians and medical personnel, and participation of businesses in wellness programs.

Manatee Healthcare Alliance
In November 2010, a community ‘think tank’ was facilitated by the Manatee Chamber and its Healthcare Committee Chairman, the Manatee County Health Department, and Manatee County. The main purpose was to establish priorities of a newly formed Manatee County Healthcare Alliance. Healthcare study reports were reviewed and priority actions for Alliance Committees were established through small group and larger group discussion.

Because the current system of providing care for those who are uninsured or unable to pay for health services has been supported by an “indigent fund” that is anticipated to be fully depleted in 2015, the County is faced with the need to replace this funding source to provide such health care and more importantly to develop innovative forms of health care delivery that are focused on, prevention, care management and cost-effective delivery care for those with the least access to care, instead of having the burden fall on hospital emergency rooms. Addressing these challenges and helping to form the most effective community solutions is critical for the health of this community, including physical health, mental health, and economic health.