



North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System (North Shore-LIJ)

17-hospital system in New York

4,507 beds

673,524 ED visits

254,700+ inpatient admissions

Impetus for Initiative: Prompted by state-based financial assistance laws that New York rolled out in 2002, North Shore-LIJ established its price transparency initiative. A call center provides patients with pricing information for most common procedures and answers questions related to bills received.

A web-based cost estimator was later added, allowing insured patients to get an estimate—including out-of-pocket costs—based upon expected insurance coverage (including the expected deductible). If an estimate is not available via the web-based tool, patients can call the Financial Assistance number and get price information within 24 hours. In fact, more than half of inquiries still come via phone. Over the years, technology has improved and allows direct access to insurer databases so patients receive real-time deductible and copayment amounts. More than 10,000 inquiries have come through the call center and web-estimator combined.

North Shore-LIJ always pairs quality information with price information to give patients a full picture of the care the hospitals provide. As a policy, charges are not listed on the website since the majority of patients do not find such information helpful without knowing their out-of-pocket costs.

Call center staff follow scripts to ensure everyone communicates consistently. Included in all communication—including via web-based cost estimator—is the disclaimer that patients may receive physician bills in addition to a hospital bill.

Challenges: The health care system and its various components are not always easily understood by patients. Separate physician fees for services, such as anesthesia, can be confusing to patients, which challenges North Shore-LIJ staff to proactively communicate and educate patients about what is included in a price estimate.

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