

135.24 Volunteer health care provider program established — immunity from civil liability.

1. The director shall establish within the department a program to provide to eligible hospitals, clinics, free clinics, field dental clinics, specialty health care provider offices, or other health care facilities, health care referral programs, or charitable organizations, free medical, dental, chiropractic, pharmaceutical, nursing, optometric, psychological, social work, behavioral science, podiatric, physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, and emergency medical care services given on a voluntary basis by health care providers. A participating health care provider shall register with the department and obtain from the department a list of eligible, participating hospitals, clinics, free clinics, field dental clinics, specialty health care provider offices, or other health care facilities, health care referral programs, or charitable organizations.

2. The department, in consultation with the department of human services, shall adopt rules to implement the volunteer health care provider program which shall include the following:

a. Procedures for registration of health care providers deemed qualified by the board of medicine, the board of physician assistants, the dental board, the board of nursing, the board of chiropractic, the board of psychology, the board of social work, the board of behavioral science, the board of pharmacy, the board of optometry, the board of podiatry, the board of physical and occupational therapy, the board of respiratory care, and the Iowa department of public health, as applicable.

b. Procedures for registration of free clinics, field dental clinics, and specialty health care provider offices.

c. Criteria for and identification of hospitals, clinics, free clinics, field dental clinics, specialty health care provider offices, or other health care facilities, health care referral programs, or charitable organizations, eligible to participate in the provision of free medical, dental, chiropractic, pharmaceutical, nursing, optometric, psychological, social work, behavioral science, podiatric, physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, or emergency medical care services through the volunteer health care provider program. A free clinic, a field dental clinic, a specialty health care provider office, a health care facility, a health care referral program, a charitable organization, or a health care provider participating in the program shall not bill or charge a patient for any health care provider service provided under the volunteer health care provider program.

d. Identification of the services to be provided under the program. The services provided may include but shall not be limited to obstetrical and gynecological medical services, psychiatric services provided by a physician licensed under chapter 148, dental services provided under chapter 153, or other services provided under chapter 147A, 148A, 148B, 148C, 149, 151, 152, 152B, 152E, 154, 154B, 154C, 154D, 154F, or 155A.

3. A health care provider providing free care under this section shall be considered an employee of the state under chapter 669, shall be afforded protection as an employee of the state under section 669.21, and shall not be subject to payment of claims arising out of the free care provided under this section through the health care provider's own professional liability insurance coverage, provided that the health care provider has done all of the following:

a. Registered with the department pursuant to subsection 1.

b. Provided medical, dental, chiropractic, pharmaceutical, nursing, optometric, psychological, social work, behavioral science, podiatric, physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, or emergency medical care services through a hospital, clinic, free clinic, field dental clinic, specialty health care provider office, or other health care facility, health care referral program, or charitable organization listed as eligible and participating by the department pursuant to subsection 1.

4. A free clinic providing free care under this section shall be considered a state agency solely for the purposes of this section and chapter 669 and shall be afforded protection under chapter 669 as a state agency for all claims arising from the provision of free care by a health care provider registered under subsection 3 who is providing services at the free clinic in accordance with this section or from the provision of free care by a health care provider who

is covered by adequate medical malpractice insurance as determined by the department, if the free clinic has registered with the department pursuant to subsection 1.

5. A field dental clinic providing free care under this section shall be considered a state agency solely for the purposes of this section and chapter 669 and shall be afforded protection under chapter 669 as a state agency for all claims arising from the provision of free care by a health care provider registered under subsection 3 who is providing services at the field dental clinic in accordance with this section or from the provision of free care by a health care provider who is covered by adequate medical malpractice insurance, as determined by the department, if the field dental clinic has registered with the department pursuant to subsection 1.

6. A specialty health care provider office providing free care under this section shall be considered a state agency solely for the purposes of this section and chapter 669 and shall be afforded protection under chapter 669 as a state agency for all claims arising from the provision of free care by a health care provider registered under subsection 3 who is providing services at the specialty health care provider office in accordance with this section or from the provision of free care by a health care provider who is covered by adequate medical malpractice insurance, as determined by the department, if the specialty health care provider office has registered with the department pursuant to subsection 1.

7. For the purposes of this section:

a. “*Charitable organization*” means a charitable organization within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

b. “*Field dental clinic*” means a dental clinic temporarily or periodically erected at a location utilizing mobile dental equipment, instruments, or supplies, as necessary, to provide dental services.

c. “*Free clinic*” means a facility, other than a hospital or health care provider’s office which is exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and which has as its sole purpose the provision of health care services without charge to individuals who are otherwise unable to pay for the services.

d. “*Health care provider*” means a physician licensed under chapter 148, a chiropractor licensed under chapter 151, a physical therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 148A, an occupational therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 148B, a podiatrist licensed pursuant to chapter 149, a physician assistant licensed and practicing under a supervising physician pursuant to chapter 148C, a licensed practical nurse, a registered nurse, or an advanced registered nurse practitioner licensed pursuant to chapter 152 or 152E, a respiratory therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 152B, a dentist, dental hygienist, or dental assistant registered or licensed to practice under chapter 153, an optometrist licensed pursuant to chapter 154, a psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 154B, a social worker licensed pursuant to chapter 154C, a mental health counselor or a marital and family therapist licensed pursuant to chapter 154D, a speech pathologist or audiologist licensed pursuant to chapter 154F, a pharmacist licensed pursuant to chapter 155A, or an emergency medical care provider certified pursuant to chapter 147A.

e. “*Specialty health care provider office*” means the private office or clinic of an individual specialty health care provider or group of specialty health care providers as referred by the Iowa collaborative safety net provider network established in section 135.153, but does not include a field dental clinic, a free clinic, or a hospital.

93 Acts, ch 65, §1; 95 Acts, ch 121, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1027, §1 – 6; 2001 Acts, ch 176, §31; 2002 Acts, ch 1108, §8; 2003 Acts, ch 89, §1; 2005 Acts, ch 118, §1 – 6; 2007 Acts, ch 10, §20; 2007 Acts, ch 95, §1; 2007 Acts, ch 159, §18; 2007 Acts, ch 218, §101, 193; 2008 Acts, ch 1088, §84, 85; 2009 Acts, ch 118, §43; 2009 Acts, ch 133, §32

Referred to in §135M.2