

[600. Collection of cost of care.

In all cases admitted, there shall be collected from the patient or his family as much of the actual cost of care as is reasonably possible, but in no case shall payment be collected above the actual per diem cost. This cost shall be determined at least once a year by the State Board of Health and shall be calculated on the basis of the total cost of running the hospitals.】

601. Determination of financial condition of patient; how payments made, collected and distributed; claims against estate.

(a) Collection Unit. The collection unit for investigating the financial condition of the patient and his family, and for determining claims and collecting charges for the patient's care, all under this section and any applicable laws, rules and regulations, is the agency or program of the Department of Mental Hygiene responsible for recoveries and collections of payments for maintenance charges for patients in the several mental institutions under the jurisdiction of the Department of Mental Hygiene. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HYGIENE.

[(a)] *(b) Investigation of financial condition—In General. For the purpose of determining the amount to be paid for chronic hospital care, it shall be the duty of the [county welfare board or the department of welfare of Baltimore City, as the case may be,] collection unit to investigate the financial condition of such person and also the financial condition of any relative or other person who may be legally chargeable with his or her care, in order to determine, in each case, the ability of any such person, or of his or her relatives or other persons legally chargeable with his or her care, to make payment, in whole or in part, for the care of such person while a patient of such hospital. In making such investigation, the [county welfare board and the department of welfare of Baltimore City] collection unit shall require reports or statements to be made by such person, relatives or other person upon such forms as may be prepared by said [county welfare board and the department of welfare of Baltimore City, as the case may be] collection unit. Public assistance payments shall be taken into consideration as financial resources.*

[(b)] *(c) Same—Determination that patient shall be required to pay. If as a result of such investigation, the [county welfare board or the department of welfare of Baltimore City] collection unit shall determine that such person, his or her relatives, or other persons shall be required to pay for his or her care or a part thereof, it shall specify the amount of such payments to be made, which shall not exceed the average per diem cost of maintaining a patient in such hospital, and the times when the same are to be made. Such average per diem cost shall be determined annually by the State Comptroller and the State Budget Director between September 1 and December 1. The [county welfare board and the department of welfare of Baltimore City] collection unit shall have the power to require the relatives of any such person or others legally chargeable with his or her care, to enter into appropriate and binding agreements with respect to the making of such payments, and may from time to time modify or change the terms thereof, as the circumstances may justify. In arriving at the amount to be paid, the col-*