

Hospital investigation is dropped

late
ason

good
ches
pico
vante

dnes-
sonny

tands

orm.
ating
g, re-

WATSONVILLE — An investigation into a discrimination complaint filed against Watsonville Community Hospital by the Welfare Education and Legal Assistance Center has been dropped by the federal Office of Civil Rights in San Francisco.

The 1980 complaint alleged a 15-year-old Hispanic girl with appendicitis was denied care because she was not a U.S. citizen, and that a woman with a heart condition was billed for care she could have received free.

No evidence that anyone was denied emergency care was uncovered

in the civil rights office investigation.

Mark Hucklebridge said the hospital acknowledged during the investigation patients might have been asked about their citizenship before being admitted because the question was part of the Medi-cal application.

That policy has been changed, he said, and those questions are now asked after admission.

Julie Silliman of WELAC maintained the violations did occur, but the passage of time made them impossible to track down.

Hucklebridge said no one has ever been turned away from the hospital

because of inability to pay or citizenship status.

Floyd Pierce, director of the Region 9 Office of Civil Rights, in a Nov. 12 letter to the hospital, commended the "commitment to provide equal services and its good faith responsiveness to OCR's concerns."

This complaint does not affect the status of two complaints concerning violation of 1978 federal rules on care for indigents.

The wording of hospital policies, Hucklebridge said, must be brought into compliance, and said the hospital now is working to do so.