

Barriers to Discharge Impacting Patients in New Hampshire Hospitals

In hospitals across New Hampshire, there are patients in an inpatient bed medically cleared for discharge but unable to leave the hospital. These lengthy, non-medically necessary hospital stays are caused by a number of barriers to discharge. These barriers impact not only patients unable to leave the hospital but also patients whose care may be delayed due to lack of inpatient bed availability. Understanding why patients remain in an acute care setting longer than is medically necessary helps identify areas where improvements can be made to reduce the number of patients affected. The Foundation for Healthy Communities completed a two-month study* looking at two frequently cited barriers: guardianship and access to Medicaid for long-term supports and services. These two issues are compounded by a combination of systemic process inefficiencies, patient and family delays, and lack of beds in non-acute care settings resulting in patients remaining in the hospital when they no longer need acute care.

**Data represents 23 New Hampshire hospitals for all patients in an inpatient setting experiencing a guardianship or Medicaid-related barrier between August 1, 2022 - September 30, 2022.*



15,799
unnecessary inpatient days

23 hospitals reported 231 patients who had experienced a total of 15,799 unnecessary inpatient days with an average of 68 unnecessary days per patient.



\$51 million
in unreimbursed acute care costs

These 15,799 medically unnecessary patient days translates to an estimated \$51 million in unreimbursed acute care costs for hospitals due to little to no reimbursement for care after a patient is medically cleared for discharge.



93.3%
occupancy rates

Hospitals experienced occupancy rates of 93.3%, including Emergency Department holds, during this two-month period. The lack of available inpatient beds creates stress on the entire system, causing significant delays in admissions from the Emergency Department into a hospital inpatient unit.



100%
increase since pre-pandemic levels

The pandemic exacerbated already stressed hospitals & health systems. The average unnecessary days patients spent in an acute care hospital awaiting guardianship, Medicaid determination, or a long-term care bed increased over 100% since pre-pandemic levels.



Foundation for
Healthy Communities

The Foundation for Healthy Communities is a non-profit organization that engages in innovative partnerships to improve health and health care in New Hampshire by addressing quality of care, access to care and community prevention.