



## Maintain hospital at home services

### Background

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Hospital at Home (H@H) is not home health. It is a program model that allows hospitals to provide acute care services in patients' homes as an alternative to hospital admission. Though H@H programs have operated for over 20 years, they grew in popularity after the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) launched the Acute Hospital Care at Home waiver at the end of 2020. Washington residents are now at risk of having these programs stripped from them if the legislature does not act by May 1, 2024.

CMS launched the Acute Hospital Care at Home Waiver to increase acute bed capacity and relieve systemic stress due to COVID. It waived certain conditions of participation and authorized reimbursement for Medicare patients. As the pandemic eased, the waiver revealed that H@H programs could offer benefit beyond a public health emergency. It was especially helpful in Washington, as our state has one of the lowest numbers of beds per patient population in the country but a strong track record in providing high-quality acute, inpatient care.

As the population ages, more patients will need highly specialized services like hospital care. H@H is well-suited to certain patients, like those who suffer from cardiac disease and respiratory illnesses. It allows these patients to receive care in the therapeutic environment of their choice while easing inpatient capacity constraints in hospitals.

Research shows that H@H is safe and effective, providing [high-quality](#), [effective](#), [safe](#) and [equitable](#) care. Many patients prefer it to the traditional hospital setting, and some patient populations have enjoyed an improvement of their health care outcomes using it. Patients also report higher rates of satisfaction with their care at home.

Hospitals including Providence, Virginia Mason and MultiCare are currently participating in the waiver program and have provided H@H services to over 400 patients as of March 2023. Several other hospitals have indicated interest in offering H@H services as well.

**If the legislature does not act in the 2024 legislative session, patients will lose access to H@H services when DOH ends enforcement discretion on May 1, 2024.**

### WSHA Position

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WSHA supports authorizing a regulatory structure for the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) that allows for the continuation of H@H services in Washington State. H@H services allow patients to receive treatment in the most therapeutic care environment of their choice. It provides hospitals with an option for addressing capacity constraints.

## Key Messages

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- If legislative action is not taken, patients will lose access to H@H services when DOH ends enforcement discretion on May 1, 2024.
- To ensure the continuation of H@H programs, the legislature should authorize H@H services as a hospital service line that DOH can regulate.
- H@H is a proven health care delivery model that meets patients' preferences for care setting and helps hospitals address capacity constraints.

## Contact Information

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