

General Assembly Hospital Throughput Work Group Meeting Summary

July 27, 2023

Outcome

MHA convened the first General Assembly Hospital Throughput Work Group meeting by introducing members and outlining the group's purpose and goals. Work Group members shared insights and recommendations on issues affecting hospital throughput, including workforce shortages, access to primary and behavioral health care, emergency medical services support, and appropriate discharge locations.

Main Points of Discussion

- Members agreed reducing the total time a patient spends in an emergency department and ensuring Maryland does not remain the state with the longest ED wait times is a common goal. All Marylanders deserve access to effective, efficient, high quality emergency care.
- ED overcrowding is not solely a hospital issue. It stems from larger systemic issues in Maryland's health care system.
- Hospital overcrowding significantly contributes to emergency department wait times. The ability of hospitals to timely discharge to appropriate post-acute care settings contribute to longer lengths of stay.
- Workforce challenges significantly impact hospital throughput. Hospital personnel commonly work long hours and experience burnout, which can result in staff turnover and shortages. Members discussed improving retention and recruitment efforts, including identifying additional funding sources for these programs.
- The recent increase in behavioral health patients treated in EDs and limited community behavioral health care services are key drivers in ED overcrowding. Many behavioral health patients are unnecessarily treated in EDs due to a lack of services in the community.
- Maryland's lack of ED bed capacity affects EMS personnel's ability to offload patients to EDs. EMS reimbursement practices need to be reformed to incentivize alternative destinations and mobile integrated health.
- Members emphasized the need internal and external patient-flow processes to create a better environment and experience for patients and employees.
- Participants reflected on the role of the ED as safety net providers and the need to provide health insurance, including coverage for prescription drugs, for Marylanders, to negate the need for ED visits.
- Attendees considered the role of Maryland's regulatory system, including Certificate of Need and Total Cost of Care Model in ED overcrowding.

Next Steps

- The Work Group will meet Aug. 23 to review past state recommendations and identify comparable states to Maryland for further analysis.
- MHA will send all Work Group presentations and materials to members, including a link to the General Assembly Throughput Work Group's page on the MHA [website](#).