

Congress Must Act to Advance Care in the Home Post-COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of hospitals used the Hospitals Without Walls blanket waivers to deliver care outside their four walls, and more than two hundred others delivered care to patients in their homes through the Acute Hospital Care at Home individual waiver.^{1,2} The pandemic experience builds on decades of evidence generated by Hospital at Home programs showing that these programs are at least as safe as facility-based inpatient care and result in improved clinical outcomes, higher rates of patient satisfaction and reduced health care costs.

A comprehensive legislative approach to fully realizing the promise of inpatient care in the home includes:



- **Two-year extension of the Hospital Without Walls blanket waivers and the Acute Hospital Care at Home individual waivers in the Medicare program**, while also requiring the HHS Secretary to release a report outlining lessons learned and key findings on patient outcomes and cost as a result of the waivers used during the pandemic.
- **Work to authorize a permanent Acute Care in the Home model that builds on lessons learned during the pandemic and includes additional innovative design elements** such as:
 - Expand opportunities for providers to refer patients to inpatient care in the home, allowing community referrals from urgent care centers, physician practices, or other eligible acute care visits such as home visits.
 - Expand the types of clinical providers that would be considered eligible to provide inpatient hospital services, and inpatient hospital comparable services during the episode of inpatient care at home.
 - Shift away from fee-for-service by incorporating a prospective payment system that drives better quality, reduces costs, and enables providers to make the upfront investment needed to participate in the model.

By temporarily extending the Hospital Without Walls and Acute Hospital Care at Home waivers, Congress effectively builds the bridge from successful waivers during COVID-19 to the post-pandemic experience. The evidence shows that this will ultimately increase patient satisfaction, improve quality, and reduce health care costs.

Congress should act now to temporarily extend critical COVID flexibilities while working to develop an innovative, permanent Acute Care in the Home Program.

¹ <https://qualitynet.cms.gov/acute-hospital-care-at-home/resources>

² <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-575t.pdf>