

Hospital at Home Programs at Risk: What Physicians Need to Know

Why This Matters

Hospital at Home (HaH), also known as Acute Hospital Care at Home, allows hospitals to deliver inpatient-level care in patients' homes under special CMS waivers. A federal shutdown could disrupt waiver renewals, claims processing, and program oversight.

Even if current patients remain eligible, uncertainty may create delays in care, scheduling challenges, and reimbursement risks.

Guidance for Practices

1. Financial & Operational Planning

- Submit claims early and document HaH encounters thoroughly to support retroactive billing.
- Anticipate cash flow disruptions if Medicare payments are delayed.
- Review waiver expiration dates and file renewals/applications proactively.

2. Patient Care & Escalation Protocols

- Cross-train staff to transition patients to inpatient care if needed.
- Revisit escalation criteria to ensure timely transfers back to the hospital.
- Identify backup vendors for labs, imaging, and supplies to minimize service gaps.

2. Communication with Staff & Clinicians

- Brief referring physicians on possible program pauses and alternative care pathways.
- Provide staff with scripts and talking points to ensure consistent patient messaging.

Key Takeaway

A government shutdown may cause uncertainty and delays for Hospital at Home programs. Practices should prepare for financial and operational disruptions, while patients should seek clarity about their care plans. Proactive communication is essential to maintain safety, trust, and continuity of treatment.