

THE AHEAD MODEL

What Maryland Communities Need to Know

The Achieving Healthcare Efficiency through Accountable Design Model (AHEAD) is a new federal model that is launching nationwide. Maryland will be among the first states to enter AHEAD on Jan. 1, 2026.

AHEAD builds on Maryland's unique hospital financing model and enhances emphasis on primary and community-based care to improve population health and contain costs. AHEAD has been developed with federal and state policy priorities to foster collaboration across Maryland's clinical health care system and with community partners.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Local public health agencies and community-based partners will play a bigger role in shaping and supporting community health strategies.

- More coordination with hospitals and primary care providers on population health improvement strategies
- Focus on prevention, chronic disease, behavioral health, and food insecurity
- Statewide shared health measures and data exchange
- Opportunities for multi-sector partnerships

Your insight into community needs will help Maryland meet AHEAD goals.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Stay connected through Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Commission on Health Equity, and Health Services Cost Review Commission updates
- Engage with your local hospital and/or health system
- Align community health efforts with statewide priorities
- Prepare for increased data sharing, reporting, and shared outcomes
- Stay connected with MHA via our website mhaonline.org and social media channels

WHY IT MATTERS FOR HOSPITALS

Healthy hospitals = healthy communities. Hospitals are more than places where people go to heal—they are the heartbeat of thriving communities. They provide essential medical care around the clock, but their impact extends far beyond the walls of their facilities. They work in their communities to support patient needs including access to food, transportation, housing, and other services. They help build healthier communities, while also lowering the overall cost of health care in the state.

The AHEAD Model can enable hospitals to bolster their efforts to support communities and keep them healthy.

Over 5 Million Lives Touched Annually

In one year, Maryland hospitals care for more than 5 million people—whether through inpatient admissions, emergency care, or outpatient services. From delivering 65,000 babies to treating about 1.1 million in emergency departments, hospitals are caring for Maryland 24/7/365.

Beyond the Bedside

Maryland hospitals don't just treat illness—they build healthier communities. Hospitals invest more than \$2 billion annually in community benefit programs, including access to health care, housing, food security, and transportation.

Backbone of Maryland's Economy

Hospitals employ more than 168,000 people and support tens of thousands of indirect jobs in industries such as food services, construction, technology, and medical supply manufacturing. Maryland hospitals generate about \$35 billion in economic activity annually and are among the state's largest employers.

Caring for Maryland's Most Vulnerable

No Marylander is turned away from a hospital due to inability to pay, including some 358,900 uninsured and even more underinsured Marylanders. Care for those unable to pay totaled \$811 million in FY 2022—about \$2.2 million a day.

History of Health Care in Maryland

1970s – 2013

All-payer hospital rate-setting system

2014 – 2018

All-Payer Model: hospital global budgets


2019 – 2025

Total Cost of Care Model: statewide accountability for Medicare spending and care redesign

2026 – 2035

AHEAD Model: greater emphasis on primary care, community health, and statewide performance targets across payers

DID YOU KNOW?



Since the implementation of the Maryland All-Payer Model in 2014, hospitals have saved Medicare \$4.6 billion. Hospitals have successfully reduced unnecessary hospital utilization, improved care coordination, and controlled health care costs while maintaining high-quality patient care.