

Massachusetts Acute Care Hospital Outpatient Observation Data— Quarterly Update

October 2018 through March 2024 (Preliminary)

Introduction

The Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) provides analyses of health system utilization to inform payers, providers, policymakers, and the public using information from its Acute Hospital Case Mix Datasets, including the Outpatient Observation Dataset. Observation visits are classified as outpatient care and serve a variety of functions, including the reassessment of clinical status and/or continues testing beyond the care provided in an emergency department.

In January 2022, CHIA first published [Massachusetts Acute Care Hospital Outpatient Observation Data \(FFY 2016-2019\)](#). This report provided information and analyses of hospital outpatient observation utilization patterns in the period leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic and presented measures of observation utilization overall and by hospital, patient, and visit characteristics.

Building upon that report, CHIA has developed a new quarterly update series to complement existing [inpatient](#) and [emergency department](#) (ED) treat-and-release visits reporting focused on outpatient observation visits, which includes an [interactive dashboard](#) and an accompanying [databook](#). The first quarterly update was published in May 2024 on data from October 2018 through December 2023. These quarterly updates use interim data to present analyses on a quarterly or monthly basis at a statewide and hospital level. The August 2024 quarterly update includes a new section on total volume of acute care hospital visits and discharges categorized by inpatient stay, outpatient observation, and ED treat-and-release visits. Additionally, data on statewide visits and average length of stay by age group, sex, race/ethnicity, and expected primary payer type have been added under the statewide utilization section.

The data in quarterly dashboard updates are preliminary. The OOD dashboard and databook are updated at each release with more complete information as it becomes available and as CHIA continues to work with providers and payers to process and confirm data submissions through the annual data collection process.

This quarterly update includes data from October 2018 to March 2024. This update is organized in the following six sections:

- Statewide Utilization
- Utilization by Hospital
- Visit Characteristics
- Diagnoses
- Behavioral Health
- Total Acute Care Volume

Statewide Utilization

The utilization section includes the statewide total number of outpatient observation visits and average length of stay, in hours. Measures are shown for all hospital outpatient observation visits across Massachusetts, as well as by the following characteristics: hospital cohort, high public payer status, age group, sex, race/ethnicity, and expected primary payer type.

Utilization by Hospital

This section presents hospital-level observation utilization measures on a quarterly basis for all acute care hospitals in Massachusetts. The measures included are total visits and average length of stay. The databook includes tabs for hospital utilization by the following characteristics: age, sex, expected primary payer type, discharge setting, and behavioral health-related visits.

Visit Characteristics

This section shows statewide observation utilization patterns by age group, sex, race/ethnicity, and expected primary payer type.

Diagnoses

This section presents common primary diagnoses associated with observation visits by age group at a statewide level. Additionally, the average length of stay for each primary diagnosis category is provided.

Behavioral Health

This section shows total visits and average length of stay for outpatient observation hospital visits associated with any behavioral health conditions and by specific diagnosis categories. These estimates are presented for all visits statewide and by age group.

Total Acute Care Volume

This section shows the total volume of acute care hospital visits and discharges in Massachusetts by Case Mix categorization. Discharges/visits are categorized by inpatient stay, outpatient observation, and emergency department (ED) treat-and-release.

For more information, please contact:



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