



Foundation for  
Healthy Communities

# **Barriers to People Receiving the Right Care**

July 19, 2017

## **Executive Summary**

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This report identifies barriers to people receiving the right care at the right time throughout New Hampshire. Hospital patients who were medically cleared to be discharged from the hospital but are unable to do so is a problem identified by patients, families and health providers. The inability of the health care system to integrate care across sites of care was a key barrier identified in a 2008 landmark article that examined how to improve care, improve the health of populations and reduce per capita costs -The Triple Aim.<sup>1</sup> This report indicates that social determinants of health, such as housing and transportation, contribute to significant financial and human costs for people unable to leave an acute care hospital.

### Key findings:

- There were 421 people who were medically cleared to leave the hospital but unable to do so during a 3-month period from January 1, to March 31, 2017, in the 26 community hospitals in New Hampshire that participated in the survey.
- 53% of the people were age 65 or older in the survey. The primary insurance was Medicare for 53% of the people. Most people (88%) were New Hampshire residents.

Major barriers to a timely discharge, identified as a percentage of the 466 barriers reported in the study, are listed below. More than one barrier could be identified for each patient. This year, we added an “other” category that included additional barriers identified by hospital staff.

- 42% Unable to access a place to live with appropriate supportive care
- 23% Unable to access needed mental health care, transportation or specialty care
- 20% Difficulty with Medicaid application process or under-insured
- 8% Persons lacks decision-making capacity and needs a guardian
- 7% Other barriers including history of IV drug abuse, sex offender or criminal record

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<sup>1</sup> “The Triple Aim: Care, Health and Cost”. Berwick, D., Nolan, T. and Whittington, J. Health Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp 759-769.

- The average number of additional days that a person spent in the hospital after being medically ready for discharge was 15 days. There were 34 patients who experienced delays of over 40 days, including one who spent an additional 286 days.
- The 421 people in this study stayed a total of 5,794 additional patient days in an acute care setting while no longer needing acute care services. The average daily cost for an acute care bed in a New Hampshire hospital in 2016 was \$2,861/day according to the New Hampshire Hospital Association. The barriers for these people generated additional acute care costs of \$17.1 million, which the hospitals are not reimbursed for, in the 3-month period for people with non-acute care needs.

## Methodology

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The 26 acute care hospitals were invited to submit several data elements regarding people who were medically cleared for discharge but unable to be discharged during the three month period from January 1 to March 31, 2017. A list of the participating hospitals is located in Appendix A.

The data collection instrument was developed in consultation with the New Hampshire Hospitals' Case Management Directors Work Group and is in Appendix B.

All 26 acute care hospitals in the state participated in data collection, including the 13 smaller Critical Access Hospitals located in rural communities and the 13 larger hospitals. Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, the state's largest hospital and only tertiary care facility, represents the majority (21%) of the people in the study. Lakes Region General Hospital (12%), Southern NH Health (11%), Portsmouth Regional Hospital (10%) and Wentworth-Douglass Hospital (9%) combined, represented another 42% of the people in the study.

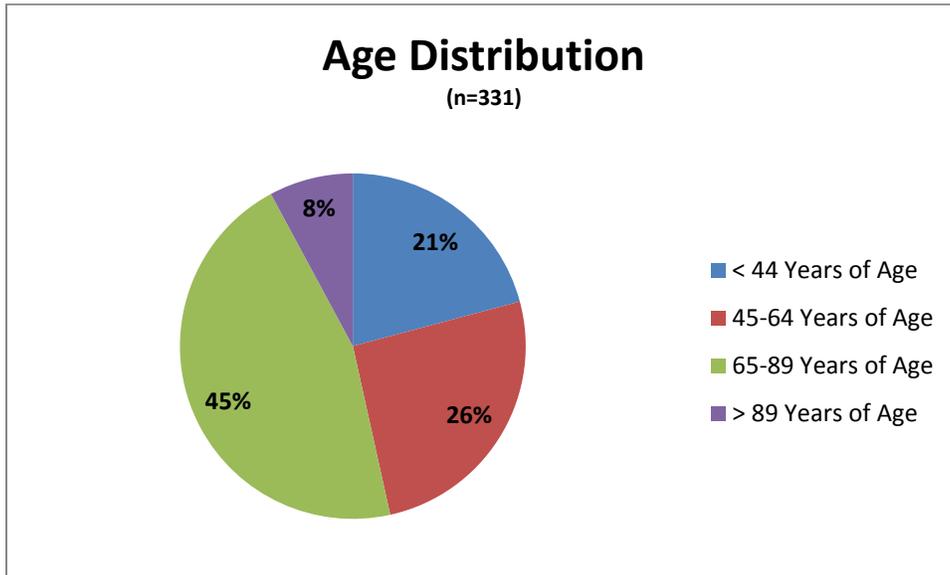
## Findings

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### **Age Distribution of People Experiencing Barriers**

Over half of the people unable to leave the hospital were age 65 years or older with 45% ages 65-89 years old and 8% age 90 or older. 26% of the people were between the ages 45-64 years old. People age 44 or younger were 21% (compared to 16% last year) of the sample. Figure 1.

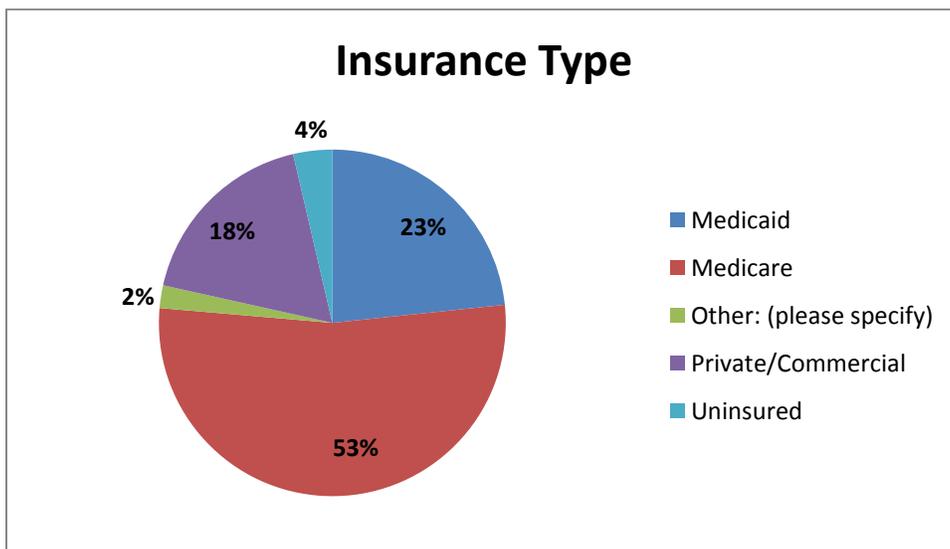
**Figure 1**



**Insurance**

Figure 2 identifies Medicare as the primary medical insurer for most people (53%) in the study. Medicaid was the next largest (23%) source of insurance coverage, followed by private/commercial insurance (18%), uninsured (4%), and other (2%).

**Figure 2**



### Primary Residence

A majority (88%) of the people in the sample have their primary residence in New Hampshire.

Figure 3

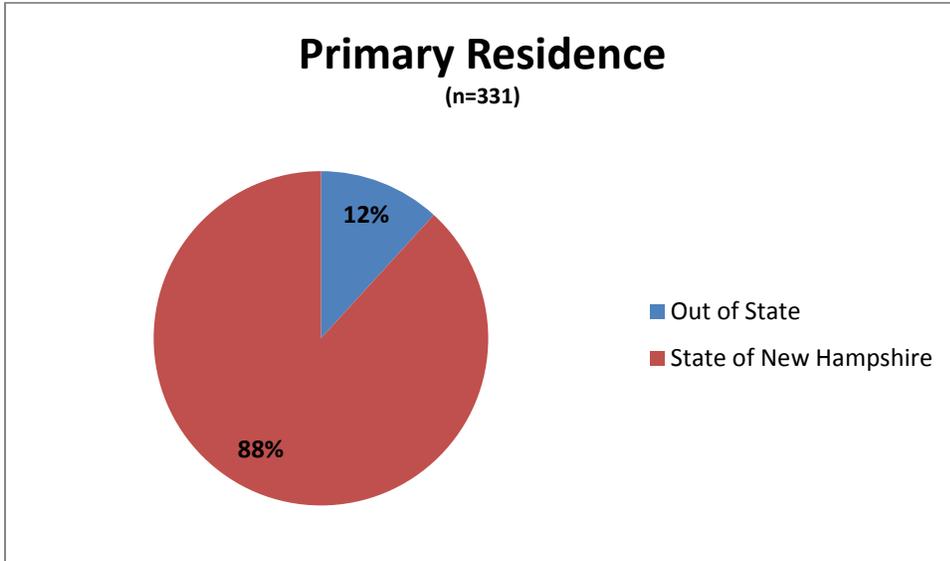
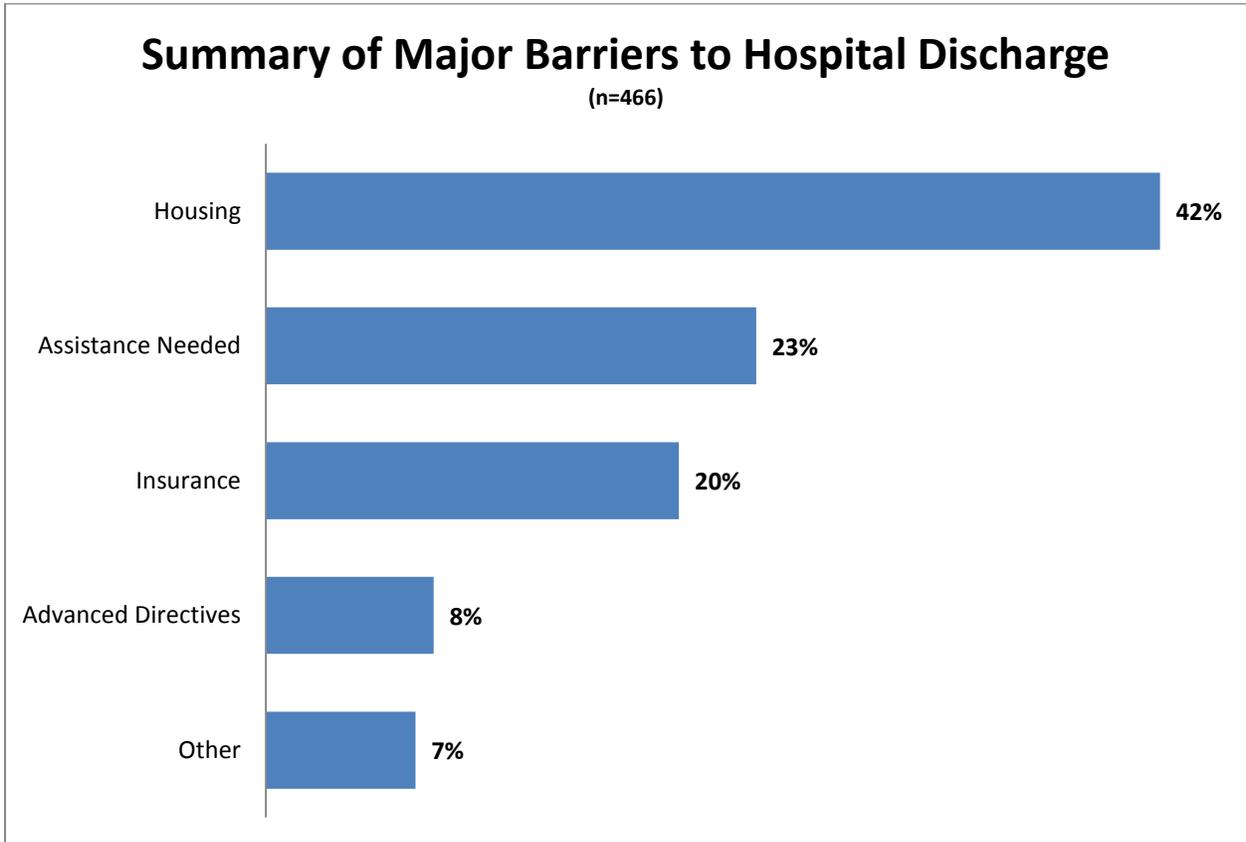


Figure 4



## Discussion of Findings

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A person in an acute care hospital waiting to be transferred to the right care setting or discharged to their home, may not have the opportunity to achieve a greater level of independence and receive the type of support available in a less acute care setting that could maximize their well-being. They may also occupy a bed that is critically needed by a person with acute health care needs, resulting in that person being diverted to a different hospital in another community far from their home.

A summary of major barriers preventing people who are medically cleared to leave the acute care hospital are identified in Figure 4. Hospitals responding to the survey were permitted to identify specific factors within the five major categories of barriers: housing; insurance; assistance needed; patient lacks decision-making capacity and “other”. Those findings are identified in Figures 5-9.

### **The Top Five barriers were:**

1. Unable to access an available skilled nursing home bed (**160 patients**)
2. Other Health / Behavioral / Psychiatric Care Needed (**57 patients**)
3. Waiting in Medicaid Determination (**47 patients**)
4. Needs Ongoing Care for Dementia / Alzheimers (**34 patients**)
5. History of IV Drug Use ( **26 Patients**)

Other barriers identified for 14 patients included the need for intravenous antibiotics (4 patients) in addition to other complex psycho-social reasons.

### **Unnecessary Days Spent in the Hospital**

People in this study spent a total of 5,974 additional days in the hospital, when acute care was no longer medically necessary. The average number of days people spent in the hospital, beyond the date when medically cleared for discharge, was 15 days. There were 34 people who stayed over 40 additional days. This included five who spent over 100 days: 104, 107, 139, 251, and 286 days respectively. The cost of care in an acute care setting is very high in comparison to other settings that provide less intensive, supportive medical care for those with non-acute medical needs. The average cost for an acute care stay in a New Hampshire hospital in 2016 was \$2,861/day according to the New Hampshire Hospital Association. The barriers for these 421 people resulted in approximately **\$17.1 million in additional acute care hospital expenditures** for people with non-acute medical care needs. These additional costs associated with acute care services provided to those patients with non-acute care needs are absorbed by the hospital as they are not reimbursable. ***This study only focuses on a three month period so the true magnitude of the number of people experiencing barriers and the overall costs are likely to be much higher.***

Figure 5

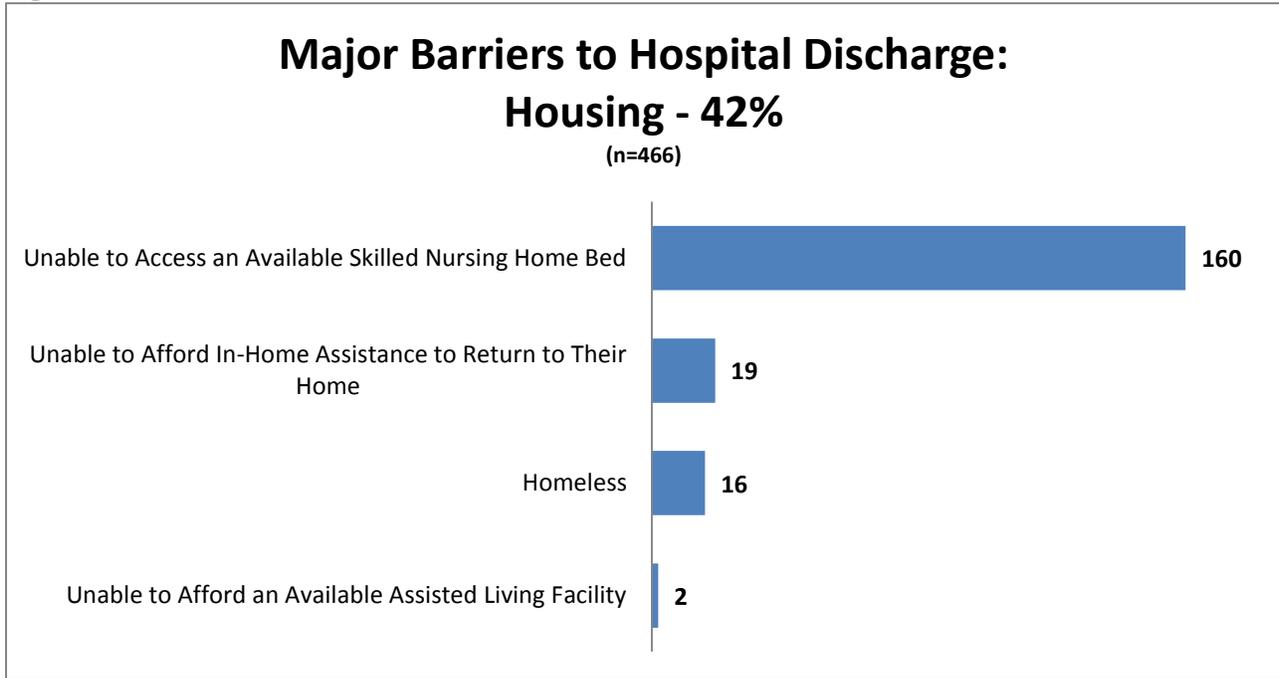


Figure 6

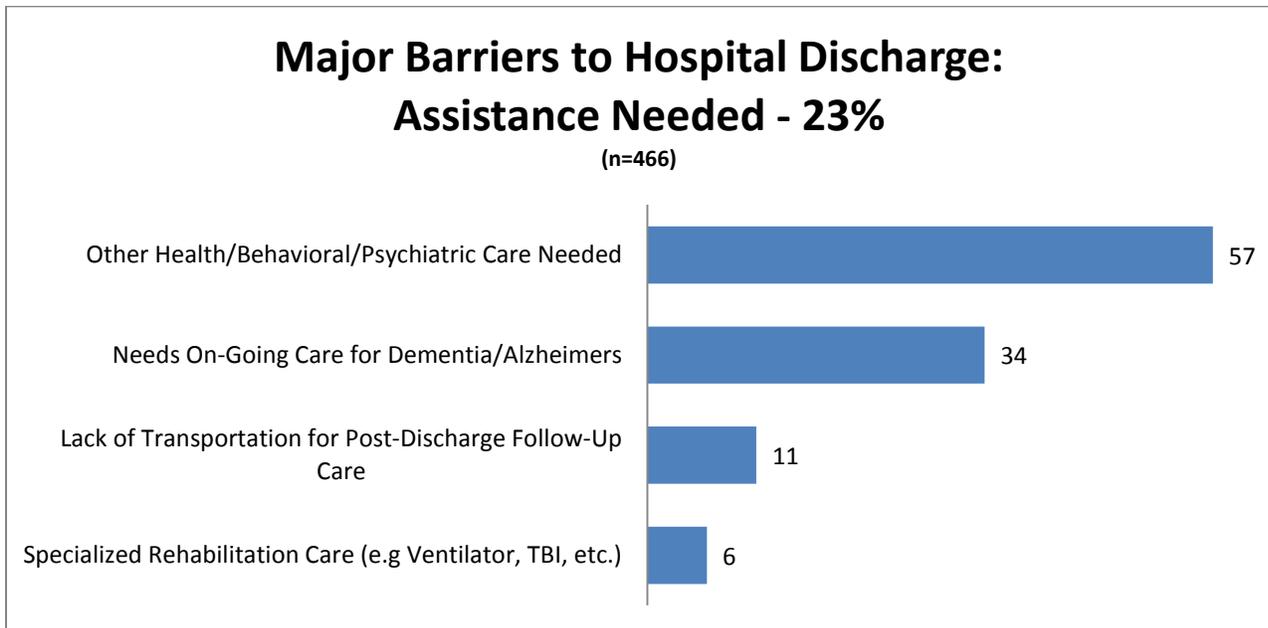


Figure 7

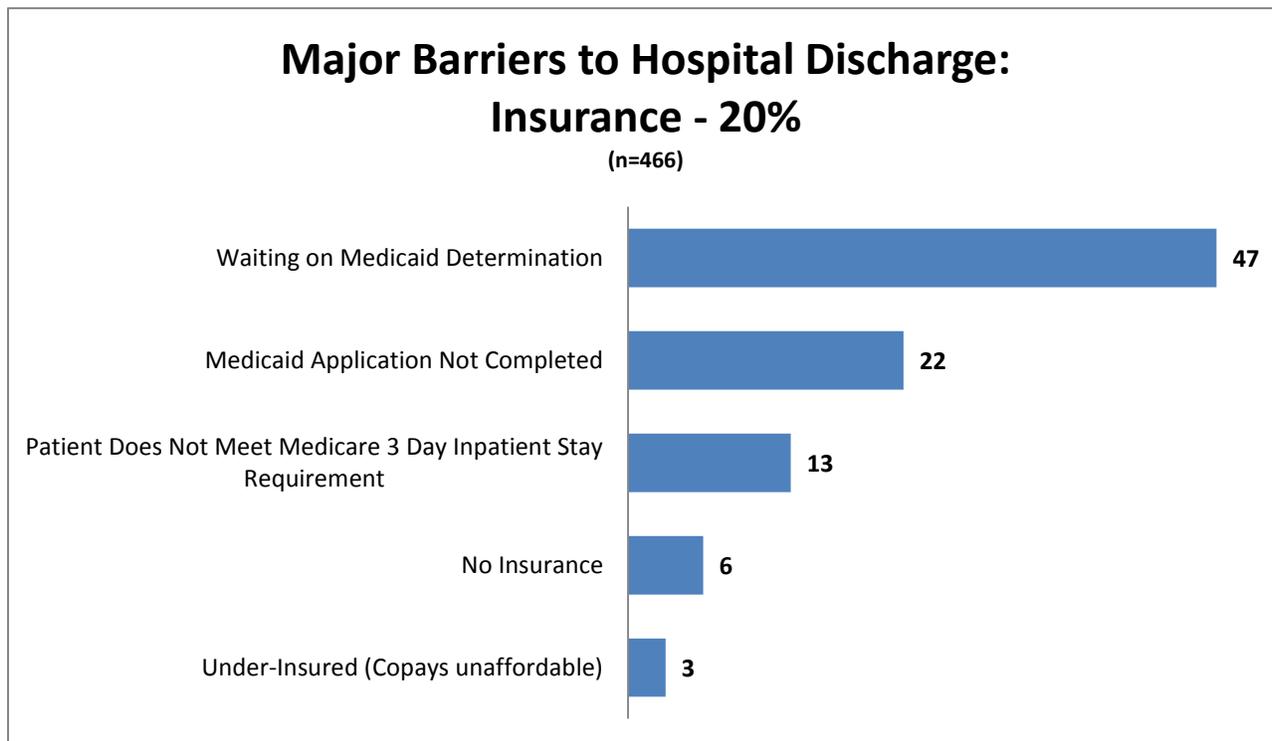


Figure 8

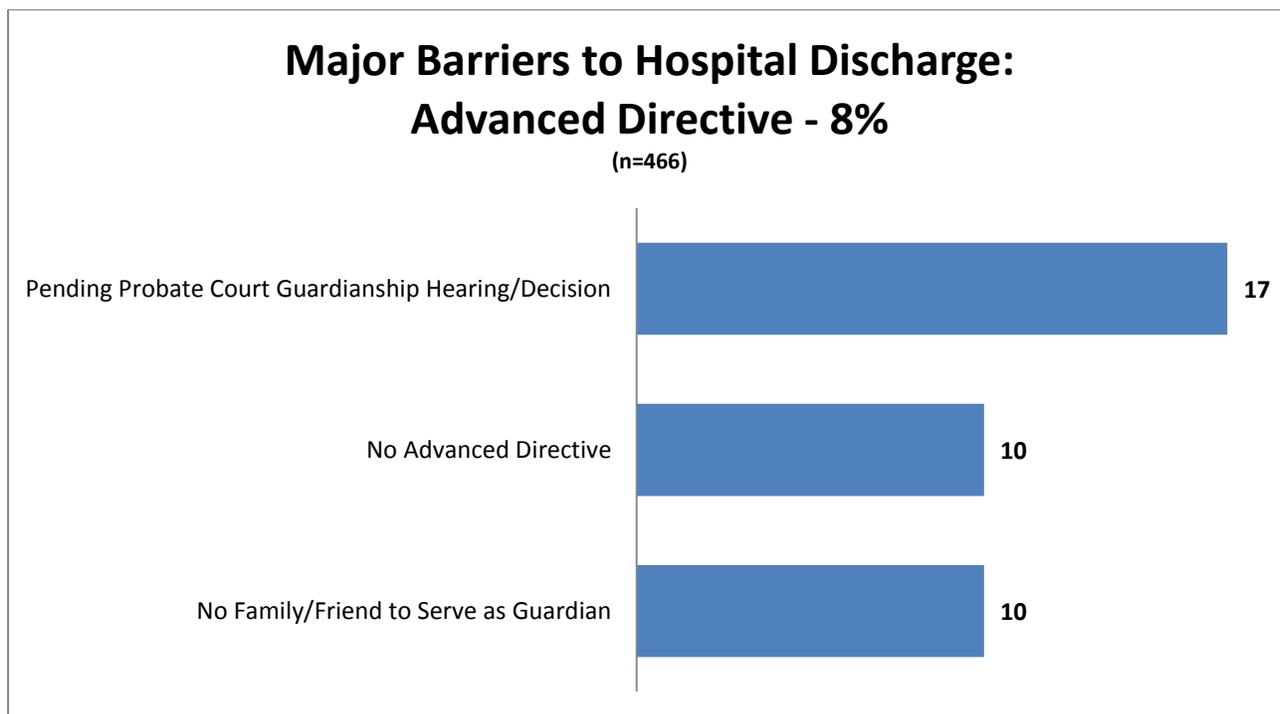
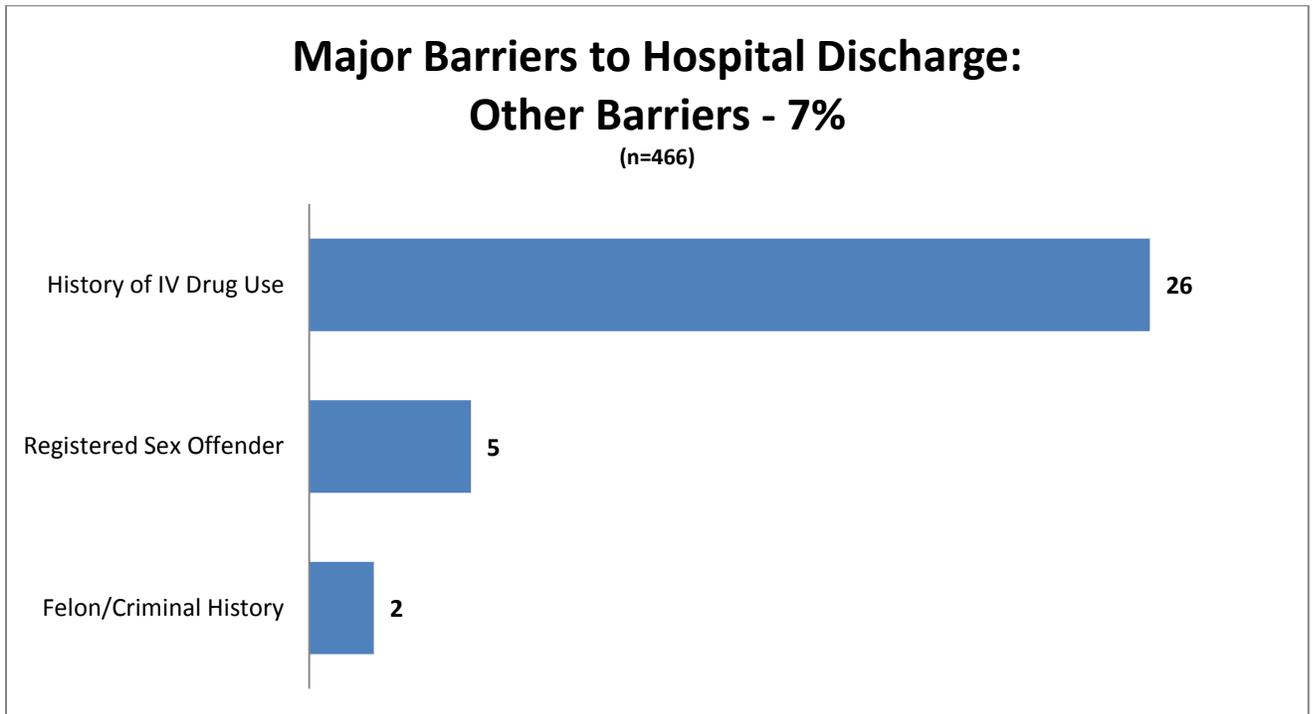


Figure 9



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The Foundation for Healthy Communities is an organization in New Hampshire with a mission to improve health and health care in communities through education and partnerships that engage individuals and organizations. Learn more about us at [www.healthynh.com](http://www.healthynh.com)

**Appendix A. List of Participating Hospitals**

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Location</b>
Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital	Lebanon, NH
Androscoggin Valley Hospital	Berlin, NH
Catholic Medical Center	Manchester, NH
Cheshire Medical Center	Keene, NH
Concord Regional Hospital	Concord, NH
Cottage Hospital	Woodsville, NH
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center	Lebanon, NH
Elliot Hospital	Manchester, NH
Exeter Hospital	Exeter, NH
Franklin Regional Hospital	Franklin, NH
Frisbie Memorial Hospital	Rochester, NH
Huggins Hospital	Wolfeboro, NH
Lakes Region General Hospital	Laconia, NH
Littleton Regional Healthcare	Littleton, NH
Memorial Hospital	North Conway, NH
Monadnock Community Hospital	Peterborough, NH
New London Hospital	New London, NH
Parkland Medical Center	Derry, NH
Portsmouth Regional Hospital	Portsmouth, NH
St. Joseph Hospital	Nashua, NH
Southern NH Medical Center	Nashua, NH
Speare Memorial Hospital	Plymouth, NH
Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital	Colebrook, NH
Valley Regional Healthcare	Claremont, NH
Weeks Medical Center	Lancaster, NH
Wentworth-Douglass Hospital	Dover, NH

## Appendix B. Survey Instrument

### Patients with Barriers to Discharge

**Objective:** Document the problem of each patient who was/is medically ready for discharge from an acute care hospital in New Hampshire but unable to leave because of barriers to a safe discharge.

**Time Frame:** In the 3 months (January 1, 2017 to March 31, 2017), identify any patient in an Acute Inpatient, Distinct Part Unit or Swing Bed who was/is medically ready for discharge but unable to leave when they were medically cleared for discharge.

**Patient #:** Please number each patient sequentially for the purpose of this survey.

Please do not provide any patient identifiable information such as Medical Record Number, DOB or SSN.

### Patients with Barriers to Discharge

\* 1. Contact Information:

Name	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>

\* 2. Hospital Name:

3. Patient Number:

Remember you will complete one survey for each qualifying patient.

Other Patient Number

\* 4. Patient Age:

- < 44 Years of Age
- 45-64 Years of Age
- 65-89 Years of Age
- > 89 Years of Age

\* 5. Patient Primary Residence:

- State of New Hampshire
- Out of State

\* 6. Primary Insurance:

\* 7. Is the patient currently still awaiting discharge?

- Yes
- No

\* 8. Enter the number of days the patient remained/remains in the hospital after they were cleared for discharge.

Example:

A.) If the patient was cleared for discharge on 1/1/2016 but was not actually discharged until 1/15/2016, the appropriate response would be "14".

B.) For the patient who has been cleared but has not yet been discharged, enter the number of days from admissions to March 31, 2016.

**For questions 9-12 below, please select 1 Major Barrier in each category. If none of the barriers are applicable, use the text space below to explain the patient's situation.**

9. Category: Patient Lacks Decision-Making Capacity

	Major Barrier
No Advanced Directive	<input type="radio"/>
No Family/Friend to Serve as Guardian	<input type="radio"/>
Pending Probate Court Guardianship Hearing/Decision	<input type="radio"/>

**Other Patient Lacks Decision-Making Capacity Major Barrier**

10. Category: Insurance

	Major Barrier
Patient Does Not Meet Medicare 3 Day Inpatient Stay Requirement	<input type="radio"/>
Medicaid Application Not Completed	<input type="radio"/>
Waiting on Medicaid Determination	<input type="radio"/>
No Insurance	<input type="radio"/>
Under-insured (Copays unaffordable)	<input type="radio"/>
Other Insurance Barrier	
<input type="text"/>	

11. Category: Housing

	Major Barrier
Unable to Access an Available Skilled Nursing Home Bed	<input type="radio"/>
Unable to Afford an Available Assisted Living Facility	<input type="radio"/>
Unable to Afford In-Home Assistance to Return to Their Home	<input type="radio"/>
Homeless	<input type="radio"/>
Other Housing Major Barrier	
<input type="text"/>	

12. Assistance Needed

	Major Barrier
Needs On-Going Care for Dementia/Alzheimers	<input type="radio"/>
Other Health/Behavioral/Psychiatric Care Needed	<input type="radio"/>
Specialized Rehabilitation Care (e.g Ventilator, TBI, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of Transportation for Post-Discharge Follow-Up Care	<input type="radio"/>
Other Assistance Needed Major Barrier	
<input type="text"/>	

13. Other Barriers

	Major Barrier
Registered Sex Offender	<input type="radio"/>
Felon/Criminal History	<input type="radio"/>
History of IV Drug Use	<input type="radio"/>

Other Assistance Needed Major Barrier

**Thank you!**