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Wisconsin Hospitals, Health Systems Show Modest Signs of Financial Improvement in 2024

On Oct. 30, the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center (WHAIC) released its annual Guide to Wisconsin Hospitals for FY2024. In 2024, Wisconsin hospitals and health systems showed slight financial improvement after facing significant challenges in recent years. This report shows operating margins improving slightly across both hospitals and health systems compared to 2023.

Key Findings

- While Wisconsin health system margins rebounded slightly to 2.2% in 2024 from -0.8% in 2023, margins remain far below pre-COVID health system margins.
- For 2024, 60 hospitals reported lower operating margins than in 2023. Forty-one hospitals, approximately 24% of all hospitals in the state, operated at a loss.
- In 2024, 17 of Wisconsin's 80 safety net hospitals experienced a loss (negative total margin).
- Hospitals continue to deal with rising costs. Supply and service costs have increased by 11% since FY2022, while salary and fringe expenses – largely driven by workforce shortages – have increased by 10%.
- Emergency department utilization has also increased, with over 2.4 million visits in 2024, a 5.4% increase from 2022.

"For the last two years, health system margins have been in the red due to significant cost inflation and subsidization of unprofitable care that is needed in Wisconsin communities. While hospital and health system margins improved in FY 2024 compared to FY 2023 and FY 2022, longer-term trends continue to show a decline in operating margins," said WHA President and CEO Kyle O'Brien.

"Today's news, while welcomed, should not be viewed as a turning point for hospital and health system finances. The cost and reimbursement challenges hospitals have faced in the last several years are likely to remain, as the demand for care in an aging-state continues to rise," added O'Brien.

Read the *Guide to Wisconsin Hospitals for FY2024*.

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EDUCATION EVENTS

Nov. 6, 2025

Hospital Board Education

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

Mar. 13, 2026

