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## Wisconsin Hospitals Lead the Nation in Patient Ratings for Nurse Communication

### Patient experience and satisfaction are competitive advantages to Wisconsin

Wisconsin hospitals continue to set the national standard for high-quality, patient-centered care, with more hospitals earning five-star ratings for nurse communication than any other state in the country, according to recently released data.

A list compiled by Becker's Hospital Review using the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) data shows 44 Wisconsin hospitals earned five-star ratings for nurse communication—the most of any state of any size. Pennsylvania ranked second with 42 hospitals, followed by Texas with 33 and Ohio with 32.

CMS shares 10 HCAHPS star ratings based on publicly reported measures. The nurse communication rating reflects how well patients feel their nurses clearly explained things, listened carefully, and treated them with courtesy and respect. The ratings are based on data collected between July 2024 and June 2025.

"Wisconsin hospitals rely on a highly qualified nursing workforce to sustain the top-quality health care Wisconsin is known for" notes WHA Senior Vice President Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk. "This latest top-of-the nation rating demonstrates that Wisconsin's nursing workforce is a highly trained and effectively deployed portion of the hospital workforce."

Building out a strong healthcare workforce doesn't happen overnight, it is the result of deliberate investments by hospitals and health systems in workforce training and education along with continuous improvement at the bedside. Annually, Wisconsin hospitals provided nearly \$400 million in education and loan forgiveness programs in 2024, a 26% increase over the prior year, while offering wages for nurses that are in the top quartile across the country.

"Wisconsin's strong performance on nurse communication reflects the dedication of individual nurses and the support provided by hospital and health systems to enable effective nurse communication with patients," said WHA President & CEO Kyle O'Brien. "At a time when workforce challenges continue to strain hospitals and health systems across the nation, Wisconsin hospitals continue to prioritize resources on investments that will help our workforce communicate effectively with patients and deliver the exceptional care our communities depend on."

"But we cannot take this ranking for granted. Physicians, advanced practice providers, nursing staff and other allied health providers are all spending more time than ever on regulatory burden from insurance companies and government mandates," said O'Brien.

According to the American Hospital Association, the nation's hospitals spent \$43 billion in 2025 alone just to be reimbursed for care that had already been delivered. According to a well-cited article in HFM Magazine, UW Health employs over 70 full-time-equivalent staff just to manage insurance prior authorization and approval processes. The American Hospital Association estimates that the average hospital has 59 full-time-equivalent staff for federal regulatory compliance, with clinical staff counting for one-quarter of that number.

"Barriers to care, like prior authorization and insurance company denials for previously authorized care, have direct negative impacts on patients but also are a distraction to our nation-leading health care workforce when they should be focusing on patient care," said O'Brien. "Addressing burnout in our workforce must start with policymakers reforming insurance processes that get in the middle of patients and their care providers."

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## EDUCATION EVENTS

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Culture College – Breakthrough Strategies for Creating and Sustaining a Magnetic Culture

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EMTALA Regulatory Series: Part Three