

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES
Top Issues Confronting Hospitals in 2019

Financial challenges again ranked No. 1 on the list of hospital CEOs’ top concerns in 2019, according to the American College of Healthcare Executives’ annual survey of top issues confronting hospitals. Personnel shortages ranked second. Behavioral health/addiction issues ranked third in only its second year on the survey, up from fifth last year.

“While the financial climate continues to be a challenge, leaders remain dedicated to ensuring an expert workforce is well prepared to meet the expanded needs of patients and communities,” says Deborah J. Bowen, FACHE, CAE, president and CEO of ACHE.

In the survey, ACHE asked respondents to rank 11 issues affecting their hospitals in order of how pressing they are and to identify specific areas of concern within each of those issues. Following are some key results from the survey, which was sent to 1,481 community hospital CEOs who are ACHE members, of whom 395, or 27 percent, responded. The issues cited by survey respondents are those of immediate concern and do not necessarily reflect ongoing hospital priorities.

Issue	2019	2018	2017
Financial challenges	2.7	2.8	2.0
Personnel shortages	4.6	5.2	4.5
Behavioral health/addiction issues	5.0	5.3	---
Governmental mandates	5.2	5.1	4.2
Patient safety and quality	5.3	5.1	4.9
Access to care	5.9	6.2	5.9
Patient satisfaction	6.3	6.1	5.5
Physician-hospital relations	7.1	6.6	5.9
Technology	7.7	7.7	7.0
Population health management	8.1	8.1	7.3
Reorganization (e.g., mergers, acquisitions, restructuring, partnerships)	8.7	8.3	7.5

The average rank given to each issue was used to place the issue in order of how pressing they are to hospital CEOs, with the lowest numbers indicating the highest concerns.

The survey was confined to CEOs of community hospitals (nonfederal, short-term, nonspecialty hospitals).

Within each of these 11 issues, respondents identified specific concerns facing their hospitals. Following are those concerns in order of mention for the top three issues identified in the survey. (Respondents could check as many as desired.)

Financial Challenges (n=395)¹	
Increasing costs for staff, supplies, etc.	76%
Medicaid reimbursement (including adequacy and timeliness of payment, etc.)	71%
Bad debt (including uncollectable emergency department and other charges)	60%
Reducing operating costs	56%
Managed care and other commercial insurance payments	54%
Medicare reimbursement (including adequacy and timeliness of payment, etc.)	54%
Competition from other providers (of any type—inpatient, outpatient, ambulatory care, diagnostic, retail, etc.)	51%
Transition from volume to value	48%
Government funding cuts (other than reduced reimbursement for Medicaid or Medicare)	47%
Revenue cycle management (converting charges to cash)	45%
Inadequate funding for capital improvements	42%
Pricing and price transparency	37%
Moving away from fee-for-service	32%
Emergency department overuse	24%
Other	N = 27
¹ If number of respondents is fewer than 50, only numbers are provided.	

Personnel shortages (n=395)¹	
Registered nurses	73%
Primary care physicians	61%
Technicians (e.g., medical technicians, lab technicians)	61%
Physician specialists	55%
Therapists (e.g., physical therapists, respiratory therapists)	39%
Physician extenders and specially certified nurses (physician assistants, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, etc.)	24%

Other	N = 66
¹ If number of respondents is fewer than 50, only numbers are provided.	

Behavioral health/addiction issues (n=395)¹	
Lack of appropriate facilities/programs in community	81%
Lack of funding for addressing behavioral health/addiction issues	73%
Insufficient reimbursement specifically for behavioral health/addiction services	67%
High volume of opioid addiction and related conditions	56%
Legal/regulatory framework limiting treatment options	35%
Other	N = 9
¹ If number of respondents is fewer than 50, only numbers are provided.	