

Increased Length of Stay: No single root cause

After analyzing the data, a Salem Health task force learned that while the following conditions affect length of stay, there does not appear to be a single point of cause.

- Admissions have not increased significantly over the last two years and our ED volume has actually decreased since 2019. (In FY 2019, we had 115,000 visits to the ED; in FY 2022, we had 101,800 visits.)
- Our case mix index (CMI), based on clinical documentation in the medical record has also not increased significantly in the last two and a half years.
- Skilled nursing and long term care facilities' inability to accept our discharges in a timely manner does contribute to LOS, but when we looked closer, most of the increase in incremental days is because of the patients discharged to home. Those patients accounted for about 42% of the overall increase in LOS.
- COVID-19 had an impact. While our numbers are much lower than earlier, 30 or 40 COVID+ patients means a full unit, or even unit and a half. For comparison, volume increased due to flu, but historically, we have never had that many patients in the hospital for flu, and certainly not in the middle of summer. However, when our LOS data excludes COVID+ patients, LOS still hovers at 1.5 more days. COVID+ observation patients had a shorter LOS than the overall population.
- Outliers – patients who stay for a long time and can skew the average LOS numbers – haven't increased enough since 2019 to account for the increased overall LOS.

No single service line is responsible for the increase, either. In fact, all inpatient service lines with the exception of Women's and Children's Services have increased our LOS since 2019.