

Decrease in pediatric inpatient capacity from 2008 to 2018

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(HealthDay)—From 2008 to 2018, there was a decrease in pediatric

inpatient capacity and an increase in pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) beds, according to a study published online June 14 in *Pediatrics*.

Anna M. Cushing, M.D., from Boston Children's Hospital, and colleagues examined trends in pediatric inpatient capacity in a retrospective study of 4,720 U.S. hospitals using data from the 2008 to 2018 American Hospital Association Survey. Trends in pediatric inpatient care and PICU capacity were described.

The researchers observed a 19.1 percent decrease in pediatric inpatient units (34 units/year) and an 11.8 percent decrease in pediatric inpatient beds (407 beds/year). A 16.0 percent increase was seen in PICU beds (66.9 beds/year), mainly at children's hospitals. Steeper proportional declines were seen in pediatric inpatient beds in [rural areas](#) (–26.1 versus –10.0 percent). Most states experienced decreases in pediatric inpatient beds and pediatric inpatient days (median state, –18.5 and –10.0 percent, respectively). An increase in distance to their nearest pediatric inpatient unit was experienced by nearly one-quarter of U.S. children. The highest risk for closing was seen for low-volume pediatric units and those without an associated PICU.

"The [trend](#) is clear: Pediatric inpatient care is more regionalized and concentrated," write the authors of an accompanying editorial. "Intensive care beds are increasingly utilized, and the reason for that may be partly a financial response to decreased reimbursement, rather than increased need for intensive care services."

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