

FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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1. VHHA in Action

Each day, VHHA actively works on behalf of its members, their employees, and Virginians to advance the interests of Virginia's hospitals and health care systems. In the past week, here are some developments of interest to Virginia hospitals and health systems:

- The **Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Advocacy Committee** (VHHAC) met this week to provide hospital government relations team members with an update on several federal and state policy issues, among other items of importance to the hospital and health system community.
- This week, VHHA staff and hospital government relations representatives from VHHAC [visited](#) with members of Virginia's congressional delegation to discuss health care issues of importance on the federal level.
- VHHA held a meeting of the **Payer Advisory Committee** this week. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges.
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently released star ratings for 2024 Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans, which are available through the "find plans" tool at [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov). Additional information on 2024 ratings changes and improvements are available in a [CMS fact sheet](#). Open enrollment for 2024 Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans began Oct. 15 and ends Dec. 7.
- As of Nov. 1, [Virginia's Insurance Marketplace](#) will be open for individuals to shop for health care coverage that begins on Jan. 1, 2024. The open enrollment window spans Nov. 1-Jan. 15. The availability of the Virginia portal means that individuals do not need to visit healthcare.gov to shop for coverage. Virginians can also call 888-687-1501 to speak with representatives at Virginia's Insurance Marketplace call center who are exclusively focused on Virginia's health

plans and eligibility policies. The Consumer Assistance Center TTY (TeleType) number is 711. Spanish and additional translation services are also available.

- The [independent dispute resolution portal](#) established as part of the federal No Surprises Act has been reopened by CMS. The process was suspended earlier this year in the wake of federal court rulings in favor of litigants challenging certain regulatory standards associated with the implementation of the legislation intended to protect patients from surprise medical bills arising from emergency care. The portal has now been reopened to out-of-network providers and group health plans initiating new single payment disputes under the No Surprises Act's independent dispute resolution process, including single disputes involving bundled payment arrangements. CMS has also provided new [guidance](#) regarding the processing of such disputes.
- The **National Security Agency** and the **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** recently released a joint cybersecurity advisory (CSA) to highlight the most common cybersecurity misconfigurations in large organizations, and detail the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) actors use to exploit these misconfigurations. The agencies recommend steps organizations can take to prevent cyber actors from exploiting 10 common network misconfigurations. Read more [here](#). In related news, the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) advised health care organizations to patch a critical vulnerability in Cisco's Emergency Responder communications platform that can allow a cyber attacker to compromise a vulnerable system and use it for further attacks across an enterprise network. The HHS **Health Sector Cybersecurity Coordination Center** (HC3) recommends health care organizations identify vulnerable systems in their infrastructure and prioritize the software update. Read more [here](#).
- The **Drug Enforcement Administration** (DEA) and the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA) recently released a [temporary rule](#) extending telehealth prescribing flexibilities for buprenorphine and other controlled substances for new practitioner-patient relationships through Dec. 31, 2024. The agencies previously extended the flexibilities through Nov. 11, 2024 while considering changes to proposed rules released in March that would limit telehealth prescriptions for buprenorphine and other controlled substances to a 30-day supply unless the prescriber or referring clinician have evaluated the patient in person.
- The Compact Act, effective as of January 2023, enables eligible individuals in suicidal crisis to go to any **Veterans Affairs** (VA) facility, or any community health care facility, for emergency health care and VA will pay for that care – including transportation costs, inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days, including social work. Emergency medical facilities across the state should be aware of this standard in anticipation of any veterans crossing their thresholds for care to support mental health treatment for military veterans outside of Veterans Affairs facilities. Read more [here](#).
- VHHA recently joined with the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH), **Bon Secours Richmond Market President Mike Lutes**, **Virginia State Health Commissioner Dr. Karen Shelton**, and **Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney** to host an event to encourage Virginians young and old to receive a seasonal flu shot if they have not already done so to protect themselves and others from illness. Flu season runs from fall through spring with the highest intensity of illness typically during the colder month of fall and winter when people spend more time indoors, a time period that is often associated with elevated rates of cold, flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 infection. Event photos can be seen [here](#), a video recording of the event can be viewed through this [link](#), and a news release can read online [here](#).
- To provide the health care community with timely information on emerging issues, VHHA will host a quarterly public health webinar series for Virginia hospitals and health systems featuring updates provided by VDH officials. Topics covered in this ongoing webinar series may include

disease surveillance, modeling, influenza, RSV, and unique pathogens. Additional topics may vary depending on current events. See more information and register for this series through this [link](#).

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2. Information, Updates Regarding State Health Workforce Incentive Programs

Virginia has several state health workforce incentive programs that received new or continued funding in the state budget for fiscal year 2024. Learn more about these programs through this [link](#).

- The Virginia State Loan Repayment Program (VA-SLRP) is a federal grant from the **Health Resources Services Administration** (HRSA) Bureau of Health Professions that is administered by VDH. VA-SLRP provides educational loan repayment to participants in exchange for a commitment of at least two years of service in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) within Virginia. Full- and part-time health care professionals who have received training in several disciplines are eligible to apply to VA-SLRP, including primary care physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, physician assistants, registered dental hygienists, psychiatric nurse specialists, mental health counselors, health service psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, alcohol and abuse counselors (Master's level), marriage and family therapists, registered nurses, and pharmacists. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- The Virginia Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program (BH-LRP) received an additional \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2024 to help recruit and retain behavioral health professionals to practice in underserved areas of the Commonwealth or to provide counseling and treatment to underserved populations. This program repays a portion of an eligible professional's student loan debt. In return, recipients commit to practicing in Virginia for a minimum of two years at an eligible site. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- Mary Marshall Nursing Scholarships (LPN, RN) are available to students living in Virginia for at least one year and enrolled either full- or part-time in a nursing program for licensure (LPN, RN) who can apply to receive up to \$2,000 per year for up to four years in exchange for service in Virginia after graduation. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#). Students enrolled in, or who graduated from, an approved certified nursing assistant (CNA) program can apply for scholarships of up to \$1,000. CNAs who have graduated and obtained licensure or certification within one year of their application and are currently employed or under contract, or are enrolled in a program to initiate the licensure process with an employer, with an anticipated employment start date, are also eligible. Further details regarding eligibility and the application process can be accessed [here](#).
- Virginia Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Midwife, and Nurse Educator Scholarship programs provide scholarship awards to students who agree to practice full-time as a nurse practitioner or nurse midwife in a medically underserved area of Virginia. The Nurse Educator Scholarship Program is intended for part-time and full-time Master and doctoral-level nursing students. All programs require residency in Virginia for at least one year and full- or part-time enrollment in the appropriate educational program along with submission of a completed application and other required materials. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).
- The Virginia Nursing Preceptor Incentive Program was initially established by the General Assembly in 2021 to provides financial incentives for practitioners who serve as otherwise

uncompensated preceptors for APRN students. The current state budget includes \$3 million in additional funding to expand the cap amount and new language that expands the criteria to include preceptors for RN students. More information on eligibility and the application process can be found [here](#).

- The Earn To Learn Nursing Acceleration Program is supported with \$5 million in the amended state budget for the current fiscal year to support implementation of the initiative that aims to accelerate practice readiness by bridging the gap between education and clinical practice while addressing the demand for more nurses. The funding will be available in the form of grants for hospitals that propose implementing the model in partnership with local nursing programs, although more specific grant criteria will be announced when finalized. VDH is currently in the planning phase for this grant program. VHHA has retained two consultants: **Eileen Dohmann**, former CNO and developer of the Earn While You Learn model at **Mary Washington Healthcare**, and **Patti Lisk**, former Dean of Nursing for **Germanna Community College**, to assist VHHA members with program planning, logistics and program rollout, and proposal writing as needed. Contact VHHA Director of Workforce Initiatives Sharon Alexander at salexander@vhha.com about interest and needs.

For more information about incentive programs offered by VDH contact the Statewide Health Workforce Manager, Olivette Burroughs, at olivette.burroughs@vdh.virginia.gov.

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3. VHEMP to Host Oct. 25 Webinar on Federal, State Response to HazMat Impact on Health Care

The Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP) – a partnership between VDH, VHHA, and the Commonwealth’s four Regional Healthcare Coalitions – is hosting a one-hour webinar on Oct. 25 at noon focused on federal and state agency response to a terrorism event that produces a hazardous materials situation and the impact of such a scenario on the community and the health care delivery system. The webinar will feature representatives from the Virginia State Police Special Investigations and Programs Division Counter-Terrorism Section, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinator Program. Register for the webinar [here](#).

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4. HHS to Transition to Commercial Distribution of COVID-19 Antiviral Pill

In November, HHS will begin [transitioning to commercial distribution](#) of an estimated 7.9 million treatment courses of the COVID-19 antiviral pill Paxlovid under an [agreement with Pfizer](#). Authorized for emergency use, the supply will remain available for ordering from HHS through Dec. 15, 2023. Beginning in 2024, Pfizer will sell Paxlovid to privately insured patients and operate a federal co-pay assistance program for these individuals through 2028. Pfizer also will continue to operate a federal assistance program to offer the HHS-procured supply without cost to eligible Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured patients through 2024 and to eligible uninsured and underinsured individuals from 2025 through 2028, updating any expired product. The company also will provide HHS with an additional 1 million treatment courses for the national stockpile.

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5. FDA Seeks Public Comments on State of Innovation in Clinical Trial Design

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER)** recently [announced that it is soliciting public comments](#) to understand the state of innovation in clinical trial design and conduct. CDER is gathering information from internal and external stakeholders on the barriers and facilitators to incorporating innovative clinical trial approaches in drug development programs. CDER, in partnership with the Duke Margolis Center for Health Policy, is also planning a public workshop on this topic for March 19 and 20, 2024. Responses to this public docket will inform the public workshop and CDER's future work related to clinical trial innovation. Comments to docket FDA-2023-N-4489 are now being accepted. Read more [here](#).

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Highlights VCU Nurse Who Rescued a Family in Danger

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features an interview with **Erin Davis**, a palliative care and med-surge nurse at **VCU Community Memorial Hospital**, for a conversation about her work and the critical role she played in helping to rescue a family involved in a serious interstate wreck on a rainy summer morning. Listen to the episode [here](#) and hear past episodes through this [link](#). Podcast episodes are also available through these podcast apps and networks: [Apple Podcast](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Spotify](#), [Pandora](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Stitcher](#), [TuneIn](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Blubrry](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Deezer](#), [Podbay](#), [Overcast](#), [Pocket Casts](#), the [Virginia Audio Collective](#), the [Public Health Podcast Network](#), the [World Podcast Network](#), and the [Family Podcast Network](#). The podcast can also be heard on the radio airwaves – episodes air each Saturday at noon and Sunday at 10 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to pcfpodcast@vhha.com.
– Salinna Lor

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7. VNPC to Host Annual Summit in Williamsburg, Oct. 22-23

The **Virginia Neonatal and Perinatal Collaborative (VNPC)** is hosting its seventh Annual Summit at the Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg from Oct. 22-23. This event is a collaborative, immersive experience designed for community and clinical care providers. The program features a range of current topics and dynamic speakers designed to inspire, educate, and increase awareness about ways to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. Visit this [link](#) for more information and registration.

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8. Health Care Professionals Can Apply for Sorensen Institute Political Leaders Program by Nov. 13

The **Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership** at the **University of Virginia** has opened the application period for the 2024 Political Leader Program; the application window will close on Nov. 13. Visit this [link](#) for more information and access the program application link [here](#). The previous class featured several VHHA-affiliated individuals – in 2020, VHHA [entered into a five-year partnership with Sorensen](#) to support its programming and help identify health care leaders who are strong candidates for the Political Leaders Program. Program participants are drawn from a diverse group of applicants from across the state, and will focus on Virginia politics and governing, policy issues and solutions, regional needs, ethical servant leadership, and efforts to unite the Commonwealth. This program is primarily focused on individuals who are 10-plus years removed from college.

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9. Register for Free October Webinar on Health Care ADA Requirements

The **ADA National Network** is offering a free webinar on Oct. 26 to cover “The Basics of Healthcare and the Americans with Disabilities Act.” The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that provides for equal opportunity and access. The webinar content will help health care providers understand their responsibilities under the ADA including facility access (physical access to the building and exam rooms and accessible medical equipment), effective communication with patients with disabilities, and modification of programs, policies, and procedures. Representatives from the ADA National Network will help lead the webinar, which is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. EST on Oct. 26. Register through this [link](#).

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10. Around the State

Danielle Griggs, PharmD, MBA, MS, has been selected as Chief Pharmacy Officer for **UVA Health**. Griggs has been a part of UVA Health since 2016 and has held a variety of roles, including Pharmacy Manager and Senior Director of Pharmacy. She earned a doctor of pharmacy and master’s degree in business administration from the University of Kentucky. She also completed a residency in health system pharmacy administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned a master of science degree from the Eshelman School of Pharmacy. Read more [here](#).

Carilion Clinic Pharmacist **Andrew Tarasidis**, PharmD, has been recognized by the **Virginia Pharmacy Association** as its 2023 Distinguished Young Pharmacist. The award recognizes young pharmacists for making outstanding contributions to their communities.

Dr. Steven Nathan, MD, Medical Director of **Inova Health System’s** Advanced Lung Disease and Transplant Programs, has been honored by the **American College of Chest Physicians** with the 2023 College Medalist Award. The award recognizes his meritorious service in furthering progress in the field of diseases of the chest. – Salinna Lor

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