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## 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:

### **VHHA Holds Meetings of Executive Committee, Board of Directors**

- Ahead of the upcoming 2025 **Virginia General Assembly** session, the **VHHA Board of Directors** met this week in Richmond for a discussion of public policy issues of interest to hospitals and the health care delivery system. The Board also heard remarks about the federal political and governing landscape from former Congressman **Tom Davis** of the **Holland & Knight** law firm,

and a briefing on state health policy affairs and updates from **Virginia Health and Human Resources Secretary Janet Kelly**. The **Executive Committee** of the VHHA Board of Directors also met separately this week. View photos from an evening reception at the State Capitol with Board members and state officials [here](#).

### **VHHA Monitors State Health Insurance Reform Commission Meeting**

- VHHA staff this week monitored a meeting of the **Virginia Health Insurance Reform Commission (HIRC)**. Among other items, the meeting [agenda](#) included consideration of certain 2025 legislative proposals and a presentation on the impact of the pending expiration of the federal enhanced premium tax credit, which is a refundable tax credit that helps eligible individuals and families cover premium costs for coverage purchased through the Health Insurance Marketplace. The tax credit subsidies were built into the Affordable Care Act of 2010, and provisions of the American Rescue Plan of 2021 temporarily expanded tax credit eligibility. That eligibility enhancement is scheduled to expire in December 2025. Without congressional action in the months ahead, it is projected that marketplace insurance enrollment in 2026 could be impacted and that Virginians who now benefit from the enhancement program would pay more in monthly insurance premiums. Discussion at the HIRC meeting centered on the question of whether Congress will act on the tax credit extension and the potential impact of that on the Commonwealth Health Reinsurance Program and the state budget.

### **VHHA Solutions Enters Strategic Partnership with Backpack Healthcare**

- [VHHA Solutions](#) recently announce a new partnership with [Backpack Healthcare](#) to offer patient throughput, mental health-related, and workflow technology services to support hospitals and providers in serving patients during their treatment journey. Under the partnership, Backpack Healthcare will work with VHHA Solutions to offer several technology-driven solutions to hospitals and providers across the Commonwealth, including those that support discharge processes and care transitions, comprehensive mental health support for pediatric patients and families, and artificial intelligence (AI) analytics and workflow tools to help improve health care management through absenteeism tracking and risk identification. Read more [here](#).

### **Register for 2025 Virginia Hospital Lobby Day at the General Assembly**

- Virginia hospital and health system team members are invited to join the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association** for the annual Hospital Lobby Day at the **General Assembly** in Richmond, VA, which is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025. Hospital Lobby Day is an opportunity for hospital and health system officials to engage with state lawmakers and share their perspective on the important work of hospitals and the opportunities and challenges they face. Visit this [link](#) by Jan. 10 to register to participate in Hospital Lobby Day. VHHA will host an optional virtual Lobby Day briefing on Monday, Jan. 20 at 4 p.m. Health system government relations staff will schedule Lobby Day legislative visits and meetings for participants and guide them during the day. View this [brief video recap](#) for a glimpse of Hospital Lobby Day activities.

### **VHHA Hosts Workforce Steering Committee Meeting**

- This week, VHHA held a meeting of the **Workforce Steering Committee** that focuses on health care workforce development, recruiting, and retention strategies. Topics covered during the

meeting included a review of survey results on workforce prioritization, a presentation on resources and funding for hospitals to implement registered apprenticeship programs, a discussion of workforce legislative priorities, and more. Contact Sharon Alexander at [salexander@vhha.com](mailto:salexander@vhha.com) for more information about the Committee.

#### **View Recording of EMS Drug Kit Transition Webinar**

- The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS)**, in collaboration with **VHHA** and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists (VSHP)**, recently hosted the first in a series of planned webinars on the upcoming drug kit transition that will affect Virginia EMS agencies in 2025. Historically, Virginia hospitals and health systems have provided drug kit replenishment to EMS agencies. Pending federal regulatory changes at the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** and the **U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** will result in those drug kit services being discontinued. As of now, the transition is scheduled to occur by April 15, 2025. Ahead of that, VHHA and VSHP have participated in the **Virginia Regional EMS Medication Kit Transition Workgroup** to prepare for that shift. The webinar held this week featured representatives from VDH and **Riverside Health System**. Webinar presentation slides can be accessed [here](#) and a webinar recording can be viewed through this [link](#). Additional resources shared during the webinar included [guidance](#) from the **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)** on handling pharmaceutical waste. Details about future webinars in this series will be shared as they are available.

#### **View Recording of Public Health Webinar for Virginia Hospital Teams**

- VHHA recently hosted a webinar briefing for hospital and health system team members featuring updates from the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** on public health topics of interest. Topics covered in the ongoing webinar series may include disease surveillance, modeling, influenza, and unique pathogens, among others. View a webinar recording [here](#) and access presentation slides through this [link](#).

#### **VHHA Shares 2024 Holiday Video Card**

- The holiday season is a time to be thankful for our blessings. Here at VHHA, we are grateful for the dedicated caregivers and health care professionals who work in hospitals across Virginia to help keep people healthy. To mark the season, VHHA recently shared its 2024 holiday video card that features Association staff offering holiday greetings. In the video message, VHHA staff wishes everyone a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. View the 2024 video holiday card [here](#).

#### **VHHA in the News**

- VHHA actively engages with the news media to share public messaging and coordinate member media appearances to showcase the important work done by Virginia hospitals. That includes recent coverage from [Axios](#), the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), and [MSN](#).

## **News Updates**

## **ASPR Seeking Public Comment on Hospital Preparedness Program Funding Formula**

The **Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response** (ASPR) is [soliciting public comment](#) pertaining to funding for the **Hospital Preparedness Program** (HPP). The request for comment is part of a process to evaluate, and potentially modify, the HPP funding formula. HPP is a cooperative agreement program that supports health care coalitions in helping to prepare the health care delivery system for emergency response during public health situations that may result in an influx of patients that exceed the day-to-day capacity of health care and emergency response systems. The program is the primary source of federal funding for health care preparedness and response. In Virginia, VHHA oversees the HPP in collaboration with the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH). The HPP funding formula is required by statute and includes three components: a base amount determined by the **U.S. Health and Human Services** (HHS) Secretary, a required adjustment based on population, and an amount based on significant unmet need and degree of risk. Dec. 20 is the deadline to comment. Submit comments to this address: [HPP@hhs.gov](mailto:HPP@hhs.gov).

## **FDA Issues Recommendations on Approval Process for AI Medical Devices**

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently issued [final recommendations](#) on streamlining the approval process for medical devices that use artificial intelligence. The guidance provides recommendations on information to include in a Predetermined Change Control Plan (PCCP) in a marketing submission for a device that includes one or more AI device software functions (DSF). FDA guidance does not establish legally enforceable responsibilities; it reflects the agency's current thinking and should be viewed only as recommendations unless specific regulatory or statutory requirements are cited.

## **CISA, FBI Share Industry Guidance on IT Network Defense Against Cyber Threats**

The **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** (CISA), the **National Security Agency** (NSA), and the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (FBI) recently shared [guidance](#) with critical industries, including health care, regarding protecting their information technology networks to guard against cyber threats. The guidance comes after CISA, NSA, the FBI, and several international cyber security agencies revealed that malicious cyber actors affiliated with the People's Republic of China compromised networks of major global telecommunications providers as part of a cyber espionage campaign.

## **HHS Extends Certain COVID-19 Liability Protections to 2029**

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently announced an [amendment](#) extending to 2029 a previously issued declaration that provides liability immunity to certain individuals and entities against any claim of loss caused by, arising out of, relating to, or resulting from the manufacture, distribution, administration, or use of medical countermeasures. Provisions of the amendment apply to medical countermeasure activities provided through a federal agreement, as well as to pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians who administer COVID-19 and flu vaccines and COVID-19 tests.

## **DHP: State Law Requires Surgical Technologists to be Certified by Board of Medicine**

The **Virginia Department of Health Professions** (DHP) is reminding hospitals and health systems, clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and other satellite facilities that a [state law approved in 2021](#) requires

surgical technologists to be certified by the state **Board of Medicine**. Since the 2021 law took effect, the Board of Medicine has determined that it will accept the credential for surgical technologist/surgical technician from the **National Center for Competency Testing** and from **American Allied Health**.

## Events

### Register for Dec. 17 'Hope in the ED' Opioid Treatment Program Webinar Featuring Carilion Clinic

Psychiatric and clinical leaders from **Carilion Clinic** will share insights on the success of the Emergency Department Bridge to Treatment program for opioid use disorder patients during a free Dec. 17 webinar. Launched in 2019, the Carilion [program model](#) is focused on patients who present in the emergency department with a non-fatal overdose, acute withdrawal symptoms, or those who are requesting treatment. Patients are rapidly connected with follow-up care appropriate to their needs to establish a “bridge” from acute care to post-discharge evaluation and subsequent treatment with the help of Peer Recovery Specialists. Combined with anti-stigma efforts, a review of the bridge program results showed a significant increase in patients accessing outpatient treatment for substance use disorder. Webinar participants may be eligible for continuing education credits. Register for the webinar, scheduled for Dec. 17 at noon, through this [link](#).

### Save the Date for the 2025 Virginia Patient Safety Summit

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual **Virginia Patient Safety Summit** presented by the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** and the **VHHA Foundation** is scheduled for Feb. 27, 2025 (9:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m.) as a virtual event. The theme for the upcoming Summit is “Improvement Unleashed: Strategies for Sustainable Change.” The event will be an opportunity to highlight strategies for supporting and sustaining improvements in health care quality and safety, including the use of robust process improvement methodologies. The event is being hosted in collaboration with the **Virginia Nurses Foundation**, the **Medical Society of Virginia**, the **Virginia Pharmacists Association**, and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists**. Event registration is scheduled to open Dec. 16.

### Register for Dec. 18 Webinar on Winter Weather Preparedness Activities

The **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program** (VHEMP) will host winter weather preparedness activities on Dec. 18, including a 9 a.m. communications test through the **Virginia Healthcare Alerting & Status System** (VHASS) – additional test details will be provided by Regional Healthcare Coalitions – and a webinar at noon featuring a **National Weather Service** (NWS) briefing on the 2024-2025 Winter Weather Outlook. Register for the webinar [here](#).

## Podcast

### VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital President

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Nick Chuquin**, President of **Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital**, for a conversation about rural health care, Riverside's evolving drone medication delivery program, and much more. 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](#), [Stitcher](#), [Tuneln](#), [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 Sunday at noon on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, 105.1 FM and 1050 AM in Lynchburg, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to [pcfpodcast@vhha.com](mailto:pcfpodcast@vhha.com).



## Around the State

**Ballad Health** has named **Brooke Davis** as Chief Financial Officer for **Johnston Memorial Hospital**, **Smyth County Community Hospital**, and **Russell County Hospital**. Davis brings more than five years of executive experience in health care finance to this role, having most recently served as Chief Financial Officer for Ballad Health's behavioral health service line. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and marketing management from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in business administration from East Tennessee State University. Read more [here](#).



The **American College of Cardiology** (ACC) has recognized **Sovah Health** for its demonstrated expertise and commitment in treating patients with heart failure. The Danville and Martinsville campuses were awarded Heart Failure Accreditation based on rigorous onsite review of the staff's ability to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients with heart failure through pre-hospital care, early stabilization, acute care, transitional care, clinical quality measures and more. Read more [here](#).

**Ballad Health Specialty Pharmacy** has earned accreditations from the **Accreditation Commission for Health Care** (ACHC) and the **Utilization Review Accreditation Commission** (URAC). Ballad Health Specialty Pharmacy earned these accreditations after a comprehensive process that considered organizational structure, policies and procedures, as well as compliance with state and federal regulations. Read more [here](#).