

FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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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 Provides Summary of State Budget Amendments Proposed by Governor Youngkin

- Last week, **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** unveiled his proposed amendments to the two-year state budget that is the fiscal blueprint for the Commonwealth for the period from July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026. The Governor's proposed amendments include \$5 billion in tax reductions to fund a middle-class car tax credit for qualifying households, the elimination of tax on tips, and making an existing income tax deduction permanent. The plan also calls for a \$1 billion funding increase for public schools, \$35 million for career and technical education, and \$13.9 million in competitive grant funding for higher education institutions to support nurse recruiting and

training. On health care, the Governor wants \$35 million in enhanced funding to support various behavioral health-related programs, \$4 million in combined funds for maternal and community health programs, and boosted funding for graduate medical education slots for psychiatric and obstetrics-gynecology specialties. The proposed budget fully funds the Medicaid forecast and features several language amendments related to payment policies for extended-release medications administered in certain hospital settings, and standards pertaining to requirements on third-party payors irrespective of prior authorization status. The **Virginia General Assembly** will consider the Governor's budget proposals as part of its work during the 2025 legislative session that commences Jan. 8, 2025 and is scheduled to conclude Feb. 22, 2025.

VHHA, VSHP, VDH to Host Latest Installment in Drug Kit Transition Webinar Series on Jan. 9

- The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS)**, in collaboration with the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)** and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists (VSHP)**, will host the next installment in a webinar series on the upcoming drug kit transition that will affect Virginia EMS agencies in 2025 on Jan. 9 at 5:30 p.m. EST. The upcoming webinar will focus on the topic of "Purchasing and Inventory Management." Register for the webinar [here](#). Registrants will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the webinar. 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. Presentation slides from a previous webinar in the series can be accessed [here](#) and a recording can be viewed through this [link](#). Additional resources shared during that webinar included [guidance](#) from the **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)** on handling pharmaceutical waste. Additional resources related to the upcoming Jan. 9 webinar can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#).

View Recording of Webinar on Winter Weather Preparedness Activities

- The **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP)** recently hosted a series of winter weather preparedness activities, including a communications test through the **Virginia Healthcare Alerting & Status System (VHASS)**, and a webinar featuring a **National Weather Service (NWS)** briefing on the 2024-2025 Winter Weather Outlook. VHEMP is a partnership between VHHA and the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**. View webinar presentation slides [here](#) and a webinar recording 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](#).

News Updates

Update on Baxter International IV Solution Shortage

Baxter International Inc. recently [shared](#) that eight of its 10 IV fluid manufacturing lines, representing 85 percent of the pre-Hurricane Helene production capabilities, have been restarted at that company's North Cove facility in Marion, NC. Manufacturing operations at that site have been impaired as a result of flooding and storm damage incurred during a major storm in late September. That location is a major U.S. manufacturer of IV solutions and fluids – it reportedly produced 1.5 million units of IV solution daily pre-storm, accounting for approximately 60 percent of the domestic United States production. Since then, Baxter has worked to restore manufacturing at the plant as hospitals and health care providers have used conservation strategies to manage through reduced supply allocations over the past several months. In the most recent update, Baxter noted that “the recently restarted lines will require time to ramp up” and the expectation is that production at pre-hurricane levels across the plant will be achieved in the first quarter of 2025. It will, however, “take some time for product to flow through the distribution channels” meaning that recovery to full production at the North Cove facility “will translate to removal of allocations for the related product groups during the first quarter of 2025.” In the meantime, the company has “communicated additional allocation increases for several IV product groups to U.S. customers and distributors, effective in phases beginning Dec. 16 and Dec. 30,” though there is some “lag time for product to flow through the full distribution network after allocation changes are implemented.”

VDH Launches Immunization Survey, Encourages Health Care Providers to Participate

The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** Division of Immunization has launched its second annual [Immunization Attitudes and Beliefs Survey](#). The initiative builds upon insights gained from a 2023 survey and aims to gather comprehensive data from a broader population, including health care providers. Providers' unique perspectives and experiences are invaluable in shaping effective immunization strategies and addressing public health challenges. Health care providers are invited to use the survey to share their insights through Jan. 17, 2025. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete and is voluntary.

CMS Seeks 10 Participants for Rural Community Hospital Program

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** is seeking 10 participants for the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration program, which tests cost-based reimbursement for inpatient services for certain rural hospitals with fewer than 51 beds that don't qualify as critical access hospitals (CAH). The application deadline is March 1, 2025. New participants will be selected on a rolling basis from May 1, 2025-June 30, 2028, which is the statutory end date for the demonstration project. Learn more [here](#).

HHS Issues Final Rules on Trusted Exchange Framework, Patient Information Sharing

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** recently published a pair of final rules. One [final rule](#) implements provisions related to the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement. The rule is intended to advance equity, innovation, and interoperability by promoting the use and exchange of electronically captured health information as specified in certain provisions of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009. The final rule will be effective 30

days after it is published in the Federal Register. The other [final rule](#) amends the information blocking regulations to revise two existing information blocking exceptions and establish an additional reasonable and necessary activity that does not constitute information blocking referred to as the Protecting Care Access Exception. It is effective Dec. 17, 2024.

Events

Register for the 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.

Register for the 2025 Virginia Patient Safety Summit

The 14th 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**. View event registration information [here](#).

Podcast

VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features HCA Mental Health Awareness Education Initiative

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Chris Finley**, HCA Healthcare Capital Division Associate Vice President of Community Engagement. He joins us for a conversation about his career, an ongoing effort by [HCA Virginia to support mental health and wellness among teens](#), and 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](#), [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 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.



Around the State

Dr. Carlos Blattner, MD, FACOG, has been named Physician of the Year by **Twin County Regional Healthcare**, a **Lifepoint Health** facility. Dr. Blattner is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology who provides a wide range of health care services including preventive care, surgical interventions, treating pain disorders, and guiding women through low-risk and complicated pregnancies. He also mentors medical students from Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) during their clinical rotations, as well as physician assistant students from Emory & Henry University. In addition to serving the Twin County area, Dr. Blattner works at high-acuity hospitals in Florida and Northern Virginia.

