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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:

### **2025 Virginia General Assembly Session Gets Underway**

- After an abbreviated start last week, the **Virginia General Assembly's** 2025 legislative session is now off and running. A temporary water service interruption affecting Richmond – a power

outage resulted in flooding and equipment damage at the city's water treatment plant – caused the legislature to push some of its opening activities to this week. That includes the annual prayer breakfast with state leaders and **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin's** annual State of the Commonwealth speech, both of which were held this week. This year, VHHA's legislative priorities include community health workers, behavioral health, workforce development, insurance prior authorization reform, and maternal health, among others. In legislative action this week, VHHA advocated against a [bill](#) that would start a phased repeal of the certificate of public need (COPN) program. COPN is a state regulatory system that helps promote access to affordable care and ensure distribution of medical facilities and services around the state. A Senate Committee voted down that bill this week. This year's session is considered the "short" 46-day session and is scheduled to conclude Feb. 22. Even years are so-called "long" 60-day sessions. During short sessions, lawmakers consider legislative proposals and amendments to the current two-year state budget. **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin**, who has postponed his annual "State of the Commonwealth" speech until Monday, recently shared his recommended amendments to the state budget for the period from July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026. The Governor's package includes a series of proposed tax cuts, enhanced funding for public schools and career and technical education, and targeted investments in health care workforce development, among other priorities. Some [key dates](#) in the session include the Jan. 17 bill filing deadline, budget Sunday (Jan. 26) when the legislature's money committees must complete their budget amendment packages, Feb. 4 – known as crossover day, which is the deadline for bills to clear their chamber of origin, **House of Delegates** or **Virginia Senate**, in order to remain active for consideration by the legislature – and the Feb. 12 deadline for each chamber to complete work on budget and revenue bills and appoint conferees to negotiate final compromise plans. After the legislature adjourns, the Governor reviews bills sent to his desk and has the option to let them become law, offer amendments, or issue vetoes. The General Assembly returns to Richmond on April 2 for the reconvened session to consider amendments and vetoes from the Governor. Throughout this time, the **VHHA Government Relations Team** will be at the State Capitol in Richmond advocating for policies that support hospitals, health systems, and public health. View a video recap of this week's action featuring **VHHA Vice President of Government Relations Julie Dime** [here](#).

### **VHHA 2025 Annual Report on Community Benefit Shows Hospitals Pump \$62.2 Billion into Economy**

- Virginia hospitals and health systems provided \$3.7 billion in community support to the Commonwealth in 2023 and generated \$62.2 billion in positive economic impact across the state, according to the newly released **2025 Annual Report on Community Benefit** from VHHA. Across Virginia, hospitals and health systems provide essential health services and medical treatment to patients and families in need 24/7/365. They are always available when unexpected medical needs arise: whether overnight, on holidays, or in inclement weather. Their teams of doctors, nurses, technicians, caregivers, and support staff always answer the call by prioritizing patient well-being and focusing on sustaining and restoring quality of life through necessary medical interventions. Hospitals provide community support in many ways including: \$1.1 billion in government payment shortfalls due to the difference between Medicare reimbursements and the actual cost of care; \$356 million in charity care, which includes the cost of free and discounted care to serve individuals who cannot afford to pay for care; \$249 million for means-tested programs and subsidized health services, and \$357 million in bad debt for services not paid in full by a patient or third-party payer; \$693 million to cover the state share of Medicaid expansion costs in 2024, which enabled hundreds of thousands of

Virginians to gain health care coverage; and \$210 million in community health investments. The data shows that in 2023 hospitals provided \$3.7 billion in community support in the form of uncompensated care, community investments, taxes, and more. Virginia hospitals accommodated 3.4 million emergency department visits, accepted more than 765,000 inpatient admissions (accounting for 4.4 million patient days), and delivered more than 86,000 babies in 2023. View VHHA's interactive Community Benefit tool [here](#) and read the full report through this [link](#) or by clicking the image below.

### VHHA Hosts Payor Advisory Committee Meeting

- This week, VHHA held a meeting of the **Payor Advisory Committee**. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges. Contact **Craig Connors** at [cconnors@vhha.com](mailto:cconnors@vhha.com) to inquire about the committee.

### View Recording of VHHA, VSHP, VDH Drug Kit Transition Webinar

- 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)**, recently hosted the latest installment in a webinar series on the upcoming drug kit transition that will affect Virginia EMS agencies in 2025. The webinar focused on the topic of "Purchasing and Inventory Management." View a webinar recording through this [link](#) and presentation slides [here](#). 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.

### 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 the [Cardinal News](#) and the [Virginia Star](#).

## News Updates

### Louisiana Reports Adult Fatality from Bird Flu, California Reports Youth Infection

The **Louisiana Department of Health** recently [confirmed](#) that a patient who had been hospitalized with a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), or H5N1, has died. It is the first confirmed U.S. fatality attributed to this strain of bird flu. The patient, who was older than 65 and was reported to have underlying medical conditions, contracted H5N1 after exposure to a combination of a non-commercial

backyard flock and wild birds. In a separate development, the **San Francisco Department of Public Health** (SFDPH) recently [announced](#) that a child who experienced symptoms of fever and conjunctivitis but since fully recovered had a presumptive case of H5N1 bird flu. According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC), there have been 66 confirmed human cases of H5N1 bird flu in the United States since 2024 and 67 since 2022. Outside the U.S., more than 950 cases of H5N1 bird flu have been reported to the World Health Organization, with about half of those resulting in death. Read more [here](#).

### **CMS Issues Revised Standards for 2026 Health Insurance Marketplace, Proposed MA Payments**

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently [released](#) standards for the 2026 health insurance marketplaces. The final rule enhances agency authority to address misconduct by agents and brokers, such as fraudulent changes to an enrollee's health care coverage. The rule also finalizes updates to the risk adjustment program, medical loss ratio calculations, and the essential community provider certification review process, among other changes. The final rule took effect Jan. 15. In other news, CMS has also [proposed](#) a 4.3 percent payment increase to Medicare Advantage plans for calendar year 2026, amounting to approximately \$21 billion. CMS proposed completing implementation of a three-year phase-in of changes to the MA risk adjustment model and growth rate calculation related to medical education costs in addition to other technical improvements. Public comments on the proposal are being accepted through Feb. 10. The final 2026 rate announcement is expected by April 7. Read more [here](#).

### **VHHA Solutions' Endorsed Partner ChartSpan Shares Value-Based Care Educational Guide**

[ChartSpan](#), a [VHHA Solutions](#) endorsed partner, has released an educational guide covering value-based care (VBC). Organizations interested in exploring VBC need to determine which program will bring additional care to patients and generate revenue without overwhelming a practice. The guide covers several VBC programs based on the amount of investment they require and the results they can produce. View the guide [here](#) or contact Caroline Kochelek with questions at [caroline.kochelek@chartspan.com](mailto:caroline.kochelek@chartspan.com).

### **CFPB Issues Final Rule to Block Creditors from Considering Medical Debt in Credit Worthiness**

The **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau** (CFPB) recently issued a [final rule](#) to amend regulations implementing the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), concerning medical information. The FCRA prohibits creditors from considering medical information in credit eligibility determinations. The CFPB is removing a regulatory exception that had permitted creditors to obtain and use information on medical debts notwithstanding the statutory limitation. The final rule also provides that a consumer reporting agency generally may not furnish to a creditor a consumer report containing information on medical debt that the creditor is prohibited from using. Read more [here](#).

### **VNPC Pitches Hospitals on Quality Improvement Project, VDH Shares Newborn Discharge Survey**

The **Virginia Neonatal Perinatal Collaborative** (VNPC) invites birthing hospitals to join the next quality improvement project, Eliminating Bias in Dyad Care (EBDC). This [perinatal substance use quality improvement project](#) is currently being piloted by five Virginia hospitals. Facilities interested in participating should attend a virtual information meeting at noon on Jan. 21. Register [here](#). In related news, the **Virginia Department of Health's** (VDH) Injury Prevention Program is seeking hospital

participation in the Newborn Hospital Discharge Survey. The exploratory survey is intended to gain insight into hospital alignment with American Academy of Pediatrics transportation best practices for newborn discharge. De-identified, aggregated results will be shared publicly and guide future VDH initiatives supporting hospital capacity to promote safe transportation of newborns. The survey is intended for nurse leads in the emergency, prenatal, labor and delivery, newborn and postpartum, or NICU clinic settings. Survey submissions will be accepted until Feb. 1. Access the survey [here](#).

### **Today is the Deadline for Health Care Providers to Complete VDH Immunization Survey**

Today (Friday, Jan. 17) is the deadline for health care providers to complete the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** Division of Immunization 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. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete and is voluntary.

## **Events**

### **Register 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 (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](#).

### **ASPR, HHS, ACEP to Host Medical Leadership in Disaster Preparedness Virtual Conference in February**

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**, the **Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE)**, and the **American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)** are co-hosting the second annual Medical Leadership in Disaster Preparedness and Response Virtual Conference Feb. 5-6. This two half-day virtual conference will bring together individuals who have a medical direction role during disasters to discuss the spectrum of medical leadership responsibilities and some of the specific challenges of the role. The content will also be relevant to future leaders interested in pursuing this career path. The Planning Committee is excited to announce continuing medical education credits will be available through ACEP for attendees. Read more and register [here](#). In related news, ASPR TRACIE held a webinar this week on the topic of "Crisis Standards of Care: Insights from COVID-19 and Pharmaceutical Supply Challenges." View a recording of the webinar [here](#) and access presentation slides through this [link](#).

### **Regional Human Trafficking Collaborative to Host Jan. 24 Webinar, In-Person Summit in March**

January is **Human Trafficking Prevention Month** and the multi-state non-profit [Regional Interdisciplinary Collaborative Working to Disrupt Human Trafficking](#) (The RIC) is hosting a Jan. 24 (1-

2:30 p.m.) webinar on familial trafficking of young children. The webinar will be led by survivor leader Alicia Cohen, the Founder and Director of [SAFE](#). Visit this [link](#) for registration information. In March, The RIC is hosting the Fifth Annual Regional Human Trafficking Summit March 4-5 at the Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel in Towson, MD. The event brings together professionals and advocates from Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. for networking across diverse organizations and agencies, access to regional resources, as well as shared learning and collaboration in breakout sessions. This year, lived experience experts will be integrated into nearly every session. An early bird registration rate is available through Jan. 31. Visit this [link](#) for registration information.

## Podcast

### VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Sentara Health Program to Protect New Mothers' Health

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Jennifer Kennard**, Nursing Professional Development Generalist for Mother Baby and Lactation at **Sentara Norfolk General Hospital**. She joins us for a conversation about her work, Sentara's "I Gave Birth" bracelets, 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](mailto:pcfpodcast@vhha.com).



## Around the State

**Dr. William D. Gaillard**, MD, Chief of the Divisions of Child Neurology and of Epilepsy and Neurophysiology, Director of the Comprehensive Pediatric Epilepsy Program, and Associate Director of the Center for Neuroscience Research at **Children's National Hospital**, was honored with the 2024 Clinical Science Research Award during the 2024 American Epilepsy Society Conference. Read more [here](#).

