

# 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 Hosts Hospital Lobby Day During Virginia General Assembly 2025 Legislative Session**

- Hospital and health system representatives came to Richmond this week to engage in the legislative process by visiting state lawmakers in the **Virginia General Assembly** as part of VHHA's annual **Hospital Lobby Day** activities. Lobby Day presents the opportunity for health care professionals to share their perspective on the important work of hospitals and the opportunities and challenges they face. Hospital team members who participate in Lobby Day help tell the story of what they experience in local hospitals around the Commonwealth and can provide invaluable real world perspective. In addition to Lobby Day, VHHA also hosted the annual **New Hospital Executive Orientation** session in Richmond this week. This orientation is held in conjunction with Lobby Day and helps expose new Virginia hospital leaders to the services VHHA offers as well as the broader state health care landscape. Capping off the week, the **VHHA Board of Directors** also met in Richmond to hear updates on issues of importance to hospital and health systems, including legislative developments. View a VHHA photo gallery from this week's activities [here](#). There's already been plenty of action on issues of concern to hospitals and health systems just two weeks into the **Virginia General Assembly's 2025** legislative session. This weekend is budget Sunday, when the money committees in both legislative chambers unveil their proposed amendments to the current two-year state budget. During this year's 46-day session, lawmakers will update the budget and consider various legislative proposals. Some [key dates](#) in the session include the upcoming budget Sunday (Feb. 2) 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 (adjournment is scheduled for Feb. 22), 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.

#### **VHHA Hosts Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup Meeting**

- This week, VHHA convened a meeting of the **Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup**. The Workgroup includes hospital safety and security leaders focused on sharing experiences, ideas, and best practices regarding current and future safety, security, violence prevention, and response activities in Virginia hospitals and health systems. Contact **Abraham Segres** at [asegres@vhha.com](mailto:asegres@vhha.com) with questions about the group.

#### **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](#).

## News Updates

### **HHS, DEA Issue Federal Rules Regarding Telemedicine Prescribing of Certain Controlled Substances**

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** and the **U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)** recently published several rules regarding telemedicine prescribing of controlled substances. They include a [special registration proposed rule](#) that outlines three types of registration to waive in-person consultation requirements prior to virtual prescribing of controlled substances and a state registration for each state in which a patient is treated by the registrant. Providers would need to apply for the special registrations. The DEA also proposes that providers be required to review nationwide prescription drug monitoring programs after three years. Requirements for the special registration proposed rule would not apply to clinicians prescribing buprenorphine for OUD. The [final rule](#) on telemedicine prescribing of buprenorphine permits practitioners to prescribe a six-month initial supply of Schedule III-V medications to treat opioid use disorder via audio-only telemedicine without a prior in-person evaluation. Practitioners can then prescribe additional medication via other telemedicine encounters (real-time, two-way audio-visual) or after an in-person encounter.

### **CDC Urges Clinician, Laboratories to Expedite Subtyping Hospital Patient Influenza A Specimens**

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** [recently issued](#) a Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to clinicians and laboratories due to sporadic human infections with avian influenza A(H5N1) viruses amid high levels of seasonal influenza activity. The CDC is recommending a shortened timeline for subtyping all influenza A specimens among hospitalized patients and increasing efforts at clinical laboratories to identify non-seasonal influenza. Clinicians and laboratorians are reminded to test for influenza in patients with suspected influenza and, going forward, to now expedite the subtyping of influenza A-positive specimens from hospitalized patients, particularly those in an intensive care unit (ICU). This approach can help prevent delays in identifying human infections with avian influenza A(H5N1) viruses, supporting optimal patient care and timely infection control and case investigation.

### **Bird Flu Cases Documented in Central Virginia, on the Eastern Shore**

The **Metro Richmond Zoo** in Chesterfield County recently reported two cases of bird flu linked to a pair of cranes – one of which is deceased. According to [published reports](#), a second crane presumptively tested positive for bird flu, accounting for the first positive bird flu test in the zoo’s 30-year history. The zoo indicates the birds did not live in its aviaries, where the public can interact with birds. The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** and the **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)** are assisting the zoo in the response and in monitoring test results. Zoo officials believe the cranes contracted the virus from other wild birds who may have been in contact with them. The zoo remains open and officials have said the risk to the public is low. VDACS also recently [announced](#) that testing of a commercial broiler flock in Accomack County has returned presumptive positive results for H5N1 Avian Influenza. The samples were tested at the Maryland Department of Agriculture Laboratory in Salisbury, MD. Additional samples were sent to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s (APHIS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories for further confirmation. Considering the new case and the prevalence of the virus in the wild bird population, all poultry owners are encouraged to increase their vigilance in protecting their flocks from contracting avian influenza.

### **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).

### **VDH Shares Newborn Discharge Survey**

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](#).

## 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 webinar today (Friday, Jan. 24 from 1-2:30 p.m.) 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.

### Register for the Third Annual VCU/RVA Aortic Symposium in March

The Third Annual VCU/RVA Aortic Symposium is scheduled for March 1 (7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.) in Richmond, VA as an event to bring together leading specialists from the Tri-Cities region, as well as renowned institutions such as **UVA Health**, **Sentara Health**, **Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS)**, and **Bon Secours**. Programming for the day will focus on the latest advancements in the field, covering critical

topics such as aortic arch repairs, open and endovascular thoracoabdominal aortic surgeries, neuro monitoring, and genetic arthropathy management. This event will be an opportunity to learn and connect with other providers who care for aortic disease and will include both lectures and labs. View more event information [here](#).

### **Register for Jan. 28 Webinar on Recruiting, Hiring, Training Peer Recovery Specialists**

**VHHA** and the **VHHA Foundation** are hosting a webinar for health systems on Jan. 28 webinar from noon-1 p.m. about the ways in which peer recovery specialists – people with lived experience who are not clinical staff – can help with efforts to improve population health, bridge to outpatient treatment options, link to community services, and help with education and awareness efforts. The webinar will feature representatives from the **Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services** (DBHDS) and **Inova** to provide insight about the value peer recovery specialists provide. The webinar is being presented in conjunction with a **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration** (SAMHSA)-funded project: the Hospital-based Substance Use Intervention Program (HSUIP) that involves hiring, training, certifying, and registering peer recovery specialists to assist emergency department bridge programs in Virginia. As part of this process, HSUIP aims to help health systems understand the process of hiring peers and billing for services to keep the programs sustainable. Register for the webinar through this [link](#).

### **Register for ChartSpan Jan. 30 Webinar on Medicare Advanced Primary Care Management**

[ChartSpan](#), a [VHHA Solutions](#) endorsed partner, will host a webinar on Jan. 30 at noon ET to offer an in-depth exploration of Medicare's new program: Advanced Primary Care Management (APCM). The webinar will go beyond APCM's basic requirements by exploring the operational complexities and revenue possibilities of the program. The ChartSpan team can also answer questions about launch APCM at clinical practices. Register for the webinar [here](#).

## **Podcast**

**VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Riverside Nurse Leader, Homeless Health Program**

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Riverside Health System** Director of Community Engagement **Debbie Campbell**, who joins us for a conversation about a new health system collaboration with LINK of Hampton Roads, 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

**Kelsey Griffin, RN**, and **Ray Wehmeyer, RN**, of **Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital**, have been named recipients of the “Virginians Speak Up for Safety Award” for the fourth quarter of 2024. Since 2017, the Speak Up Awards have been presented by the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** in recognition of individuals and teams within Virginia hospitals who speak up to prevent potential harm to patients or staff members. Griffin was recognized for actions taken to escalate concerns for a patient who was being prepared for discharge. Wehmeyer was recognized for actions taken in response to a medical supply availability disruption announced by one of the hospital’s vendors.