

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:

Virginia General Assembly Acts on COPN, Malpractice Legislation Ahead of Budget Sunday, Crossover

- There is now more clarity on the fate of several bills of interest to hospitals and health systems in the lead up to this weekend when the **Virginia General Assembly** will host budget Sunday, which is the day when the legislative money committees unveil their proposed amendments to the current two-year state budget. An amended version of [House Bill 2219](#) is advancing. It directs the State Health Services Plan Task Force to develop recommendations for expedited certificate of public need (COPN) application review for projects in low population rural areas that meet certain conditions including lack of health care facility access. Another proposal, [House Bill 2698](#), to create a COPN exception for hospitals that solely provide maternity care has been tabled. Legislation ([Senate Bill 904](#)) to lift the medical malpractice cap in situations involving patients 10 and younger failed to advance out of a Senate committee this week. And bills ([House Bill 2099](#) and [Senate Bill 1215](#)) to reform health insurance prior authorization practices has passed the House of Delegates. This coming Tuesday, Feb. 4, is 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 Feb. 12 is the 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 Affairs Team** will be at the State Capitol in Richmond advocating for policies that support hospitals, health systems, and public health. View a brief video recap of recent action at the legislature [here](#).

Report Shows Virginia Hospital Spending Below National Average, Health Insurance Costs Rise Sharply

- Virginia families and individuals have endured double-digit percentage increases in health insurance premium costs in recent years, according to a [new statewide analysis of health care spending trends](#) conducted by **Onpoint Health Data**, a non-partisan analytics firm. The analysis shows that from 2019-2023, annual private health insurance premiums in Virginia increased 20.2 percent for single individuals and 22.1 percent for families. During the same period, total personal health care (PHC) spending (which includes hospital and professional care) increased by just 1.2 percent. The study further notes that since 2008 single premiums are up 94 percent and family premiums have risen 103 percent. When annual out-of-pocket deductible costs are added to premium costs, total insurance costs have gone up 103 percent and 110 percent, respectively. The Onpoint Health Data analysis shows that the average single health insurance premium in 2023 was \$8,144 and the average family health insurance premium was \$24,251 for people with private sector employer-sponsored health care coverage. Findings in the study are based on data from the **U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**, the **U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**, and the **Virginia All-Payer Claims Database (APCD)**. The report evaluates total health care spending, spending by category and payer, insurance premiums, and workforce trends. Read more [here](#).

VHHA Hosts Member Briefing Calls on Blue Cross, Blue Shield Settlement

- This week, VHHA hosted a pair of briefing calls for hospital members regarding the Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) provider antitrust litigation settlement. If approved by the court, the settlement will establish a \$2.8 billion settlement fund. Settling defendants, which include all Blue Cross Blue Shield plans nationwide, will also agree to make changes in the way they do

business that will address the challenged practices and increase the opportunities for competition in the marketplace. All hospitals that served BCBS members during the settlement period are considered part of the class unless they opt-out by March 4, 2025. Class members must submit claims to receive a portion of the settlement fund. More information is available [here](#) and provider claim forms can be accessed through this [link](#). Please contact Craig Connors at cconnors@vhha.com with any questions.

VHHA, Community Colleges, On Board Virginia Host Health Care Careers Webinar Series

- This week, **VHHA, Virginia's Community Colleges**, and [On Board Virginia](#) hosted the first installment of a three-part webinar series for educators, students, and parents about health care careers and the skills and education they require. The first two webinars in the series focus on exploring high-demand health care roles and the education necessary to work in those professions. Upcoming webinars in the series are scheduled for Feb. 12 from 4-5 p.m. and Feb. 26 from 4-5 p.m. about high-demand health care roles and hospital roles for aspiring nurses, respectively. Register for those webinars [here](#) and [here](#).

VHHA Hosts Webinar on Recruiting, Hiring, Training Peer Recovery Specialists

- This week, **VHHA** and the **VHHA Foundation** hosted a webinar for health systems 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 featured representatives from the **Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)** and **Inova** who provided insight about the value peer recovery specialists provide. The webinar was 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.

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 [Cardinal News](#), [Axios Richmond](#), [WAVY](#), [MSN](#), [VPM](#), the [Augusta Free Press](#), the [Staunton News Leader](#), and [Chief Healthcare Executive](#).

News Updates

Trump Administration Issues, then Rescinds Memo Halting Many Federal Grant Programs

This week, the **Administration of U.S. President Donald Trump** issued a [memo](#) directing federal agencies to “temporarily pause all activities related to obligation or disbursement of all Federal financial assistance, and other relevant agency activities that may be implicated by the executive orders,

including, but not limited to, financial assistance for foreign aid, nongovernmental organizations, DEI, woke gender ideology, and the green new deal” before [reportedly](#) withdrawing from the position days later. The White House subsequently [indicated](#) the freeze remained in place despite the memo being rescinded. Initially, the Administration issued the memo calling for the freeze to conduct a review of agency programs and determine potential future funding allocations for programs that are “consistent with the law and the President’s priorities.” The missive from the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) indicated that the memo should not be construed to impact Medicare or Social Security benefits. White House officials later said it would not impact Medicaid either. While the extent of the implications of this evolving situation is still being determined, VHHA is working with elected officials, government agency partners, members, and stakeholders to assess the potential programmatic and financial impacts of any federal action.

VDH Reports Two Pediatric Flu Fatalities in Virginia

This week, the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH) reported two influenza-associated pediatric deaths. These are the first such reports for the 2024–25 influenza (flu) season in Virginia. One death occurred in a young school-aged child (5–12 years old) in Virginia’s Eastern Region. Another involved a teenager (13–17 years old) in the Central Region. As hospitals and health care providers experience an increase in flu cases and patients seeking care, VDH continues to encourage preventative behaviors such as annual flu vaccination, hand hygiene, and staying home when ill. Read more [here](#).

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.

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.

Feb. 1 is Response Deadline for VDH 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 Latest Webinar in EMS Drug Kit Transition Series on Feb. 5

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)**, is hosting the latest installment of a webinar series focused on the upcoming drug kit transition affecting Virginia's EMS agencies in 2025. The upcoming webinar is scheduled for Feb. at 5:30 p.m. EST. Panelists and topics for that session include the **U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** on use of the CSOS and Form 222, the **Virginia Board of Pharmacy** on EMS Audits, and the **Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services** on the decision by agencies on whether or not to carry medications. Register for the webinar [here](#). Registrants will receive a confirmation e-mail with instructions for joining the webinar. A guide for attendees can be accessed [here](#) and information about asking questions is available through this [link](#).

Register for Feb. 19 Qualivis Webinar on Creative Strategies to Build a Strong Talent Pipeline

[Qualivis](#), a [VHHA Solutions](#) endorsed partner, will host a Feb. 19 webinar at 2 p.m. ET on "Creative Strategies for Building a Strong Talent Pipeline." Discover innovative workforce solutions with Qualivis in this partnered Aya webinar featuring **Dr. Hussein Tahan** of **MedStar Health** and **David Rutherford** of **OhioHealth** during the webinar session that explores talent pipeline strategies like internal education programs and apprenticeship programs to address health care workforce shortages. Participants are eligible for one ANCC CE contact hour. Register for the webinar [here](#).

Register for the 2025 Virginia Patient Safety Summit on Feb. 27

The 14th 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](#).

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 In-Person Regional Human Trafficking Summit in March in Towson, MD

January is **Human Trafficking Prevention Month** and the multi-state non-profit [Regional Interdisciplinary Collaborative Working to Disrupt Human Trafficking](#) (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 today (Friday, Jan. 31). Visit this [link](#) for registration information.

Podcast

VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features UVA Health Professor on Antibiotic Resistance Research

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Jason Papin**, PhD, a professor of Biomedical Engineering at the **University of Virginia Medical School**, for a conversation about his career, exciting new developments in research on targeted antibiotics, 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](#), [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.



Around the State

Dr. Arah Robbins, a physician with **Carilion Clinic**, and **Nick Kaknes**, a night-shift hospitalist at **HCA Virginia's LewisGale Medical Center**, have been named to The Roanoker's 40 Under 40 Class of 2025 [list](#). Read more about them [here](#) and [here](#).



Sovah Health, a **Lifepoint Health** facility, recently announced that **Dr. Mohammed Akhter**, MD, has joined its medical staff and is offering cardiovascular services for patients at **Sovah Heart & Vascular – Danville**. Dr. Akhter earned his medical degree from King Edward Medical School at the University of Punjab in Pakistan and completed his internal medicine residency at the Keck School of Medicine in California. He completed his Heart Failure Research and Cardiovascular Medicine Fellowship at the University of Southern California, Interventional Cardiology Fellowship at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and Peripheral Vascular Fellowship at Tufts University School of Medicine. Read more [here](#).

Chris Turnbull has been named Chief of Staff to **Carilion Clinic** President and Chief Executive Officer **Steve Arner**. Turnbull brings more than 25 years of leadership, communications, and management consulting experience to the position. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in English from Roanoke College and a master of science degree in management, with a focus on leadership communication, from the University of Maryland Global Campus. Read more [here](#).

