

You are receiving this e-mail from VHHA because you requested a subscription. For continued delivery of this e-mail version, please add jtwalker@vhha.com to your address book today.

Articles:

1. [VHHA in Action](#)
2. [VHHA Hosts Hospital Lobby Day at the State Capitol During 2024 Virginia General Assembly Session](#)
3. [Register for 2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit in February](#)
4. [VHHA Shared Services Announces Rebrand as 'VHHA Solutions'](#)
5. [HHS, CMS Initiate Education Effort to Inform the Public About Rights Under EMTALA](#)
6. [VHHA Patients Come First Podcast Highlights Virginia Health Insurance Marketplace](#)
7. [VHHA Solutions Partners Offer Webinars on Chronic Care Management, Patient Affordability Gap](#)
8. [CMS Finalizes Rule to Enhance Health Insurance Prior Authorization Process](#)
9. [Federal Agencies to Reopen Public Comment Period on Surprise Bills Dispute Resolution Process](#)
10. [Around the State](#)

1. 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 held a weekly legislative briefing call for its **Board of Directors** and convened a meeting of the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Advocacy Committee** (VHHAC) for discussions about pending legislation, policy, and budgetary issues before the **Virginia General Assembly**.
- This week, VHHA helped facilitate a meeting between behavioral health hospital leaders in Hampton Roads and **Melissa Herd**, Region 3 Acting Director with the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS). Behavioral health leaders from **Bon Secours Hampton Roads, Chesapeake Regional Healthcare, Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters, Sentara Healthcare**, and **Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center** were present for the meeting in Virginia Beach. Also present were representatives from Community Services Boards (CSB) in Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach. During the 90-minute meeting, participants covered a range of topics including mobile crisis intervention, emergency department boarding challenges, patient placement and resource considerations, patients with complex needs, structured residential housing for individuals with serious mental illness, and collaboration among public and private sector stakeholders as well as faith- and school-based behavioral health initiatives.
- The fourth annual **Insights Into Autism** conference is being held Friday, Feb. 2 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at **Eastern Virginia Medical School** (EVMS). The event is presented by **Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters** (CHKD) and EVMS in collaboration with the **Autism Society of Tidewater Virginia** and **Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs** (SECEP). The program provide attendees with resources for advocacy and a better understanding of neurodiversity from many perspectives including augmentative communication, improving and providing ideas

for autism care, transitioning to adulthood, adaptability, and camouflaging for females and highly functional people with autism. It is intended for providers and stakeholders including pediatricians, neurologists, psychiatrists, nurses, occupational therapists, speech therapists, art therapists, special education teachers, social workers, other interested allied health professionals, and anyone who wishes to improve care to patients and families diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Continuing education credits are available. Visit this [link](#) for more information and registration details.

- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) 2024 [Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care \(mPINC\)](#) survey launched this month. The mPINC survey measures maternity care practices and policies and includes questions about infant nutrition. About every two years, CDC invites all hospitals with maternity services in the United States and territories to participate. Learn more about how CDC administers the mPINC survey [here](#). Those with questions about mPINC, or an interest in being added to a listserv to participate in the survey, are encouraged to email mPINC@cdc.gov and include the full name and email address of the facility maternal health lead.
- Virginia birthing hospitals can contact VFC@vdh.virginia.gov to discuss enrollment in the **Vaccines for Children** (VFC) program, which provides RSV vaccines to facilities at no cost. Enrollment in the VFC program is an important step to ensuring access to RSV immunization for children with Medicaid or no insurance coverage born at Virginia hospitals.
- **Virginia Health Information** (VHI) has published an [interactive data dashboard](#) on health insurance costs and transparency. The dashboard is the result of [legislation](#) approved by the **Virginia General Assembly** in 2022 that requires the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH), in consultation with the **Virginia State Corporation Commission's** (SCC) **Bureau of Insurance** (BOI), to establish a methodology for evaluating health insurance carrier and managed care organization plans with the goal of enhancing transparency and competition among insurance carriers to support consumers in making coverage decisions. Stakeholders including BOI, VDH, VHI, the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association**, the **Virginia Association of Health Plans**, and the **Medical Society of Virginia**, among others, participated in the work of developing the methodology and identifying data sources for the dashboard.
- Register now for the fourth annual Regional Human Trafficking Summit hosted by the **Regional Interdisciplinary Collaborative Working to Disrupt Human Trafficking** (RIC), a multi-state non-profit group that brings together academics, advocates, caregivers, clinicians, law enforcement, survivors, and other stakeholders who are working to end human trafficking. The theme of the Summit, which is scheduled for Feb. 7-8, 2024 at the **VCU School of Medicine**, is "Expanding Community Partnerships to Address Human Trafficking." Registration is available through this [link](#) and information about sponsorship opportunities is available [here](#).
- The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) has issued a [final rule](#) that rolls back an earlier rule providing greater latitude to health care workers who declined to medically terminate pregnancies due to religious or moral objections. The final rule issued by HHS under the aegis of **U.S. President Joe Biden** unwinds provisions of a rule implemented under former **U.S. President Donald Trump** that would have denied federal funding to health care facilities that compelled clinicians to provide treatment such as abortion, contraceptives, or gender care at odds with their personal beliefs. The Trump-era rule from 2019 did not take effect after being blocked in federal court as a result of litigation challenging its legality. The new final rule takes effect March 11. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- The **American Red Cross** recently [announced](#) an emergency blood shortage and urged Americans to donate blood or platelets to address the shortage so lifesaving medical procedures

may proceed without delay. Blood donations to the Red Cross have decreased 40 percent in the past 20 years, the organization noted. To encourage donations this January during **National Blood Donor Month**, the Red Cross and **National Football League** have partnered to offer donors a [chance to win a trip for two to the Super Bowl](#).

- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) has updated [guidance](#) for the use of the monoclonal antibody nirsevimab to prevent severe respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in young children due to an expected increase in supply from manufacturers.
- The **Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services** (DMAS) has notified health care providers and managed care organizations (MCO) that as of Jan. 1 the agency is implementing 12-month continuous eligibility for children younger than 19 in Medicaid and Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS), in accordance with a federal mandate that requires states to provide 12 months of continuous eligibility for children under age 19 in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (called FAMIS in Virginia), with limited exceptions. Continuous eligibility means the child remains enrolled for a protected 12-month period, during which their coverage cannot be reduced or terminated regardless of changes in circumstance. Read more [here](#).
- The **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH) is hosting a series of educational training sessions for health care providers regarding updated information and lessons learned from the 2022-2023 Mpox outbreak. The sessions will highlight the epidemiology of the outbreak and the risk of reemergence, prevention and control strategies, and vaccination and communication strategies. Four sessions are scheduled, and each will be held from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on the following dates and locations: Double Tree Hotel Charlottesville on Jan. 31, Wytheville Community College on Feb. 8, and the Hyatt Place Chesapeake on Feb. 14. Information about continuing education credit available to participants can be viewed online [here](#). Registration is required through this [link](#).
- Certificate of Public Need (COPN) application fees are set to increase under a [new fee schedule approved in December](#) by the **Virginia State Board of Health**. COPN application fees were last changed by the **Virginia General Assembly** in 1996. Regulations adopted by the Board call for the COPN application fee to increase from 1 percent to 1.5 percent “of the total capital expenditure” for a project, an increase in the “minimum and maximum fee caps to \$1,600 (raised from \$1,000) and \$44,000 (up from \$20,000),” and a “\$70 registration fee for certain capital expenditures and medical equipment and services.” This regulatory action follows previous work on promulgation of a COPN fee schedule that proposed a three-fold increase to the maximum fee (up to \$60,000) with no increase to the minimum fee or other adjustments. At the request of VHHA and other stakeholders, those proposed regulations were [withdrawn](#) in 2022 pending further work to develop a revised proposal addressing concerns about the initial version proffered. The current proposed fee schedule, which seeks to smooth over fee increases across all applicants, is now pending Executive Branch review prior to publication on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website for a public comment period. The regulations will be effective 15 days following the conclusion of the public comment period.
- The **Virginia State Corporation Commission** (SCC) has updated its website to provide resources for health care providers who submit complaints alleging insurer noncompliance with applicable laws and regulations. Under the [law](#), the SCC **Bureau of Insurance** (BOI) investigates all complaints and, following subsequent investigations, reports its findings and any resulting action to the complainants. The provider complaint procedures can be accessed online [here](#) under the “File Your Complaint/Appeal by Mail or Fax (Complaint Forms)” section.

[Back](#)

2. VHHA Hosts Hospital Lobby Day at the State Capitol During 2024 Virginia General Assembly Session

Hospital leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered in Richmond this week for a series of events related to the ongoing **Virginia General Assembly 2024** legislative session. This includes a VHHA orientation session for new hospital executives, annual Hospital Lobby Day activities at the State Capitol, and a meeting of the **VHHA Board of Directors**. The orientation for new hospital executives provided an overview of the services and supports VHHA offers to member hospitals and health systems as well as remarks from state leaders including **Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) Director Cheryl Roberts**, **Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) Commissioner Nelson Smith**, **Virginia Department of Health Professions (DHP) Director Arne Owens**, and **Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Commissioner Dr. Karen Shelton**. During Hospital Lobby Day, representatives for member hospitals and health systems visited the State Capitol and engaged with legislators to share their perspective on the challenging conditions confronting health care providers and potential policy solutions to address those issues. View images from the orientation session and lobby day activities [here](#) and [here](#). During the **VHHA Board of Directors** meeting, **Virginia Health and Human Resources Secretary John Littel** addressed the board, as did **FBI Richmond Field Office Special Agent In-Charge Stanley Meador**, who spoke about cybersecurity issues. On the legislative front, several bills of interest to the health care community advanced through steps in the process during the past week. That includes legislation ([House Bill 34](#)) to establish a three-year statute of limitations on medical debt collection activities from the time care was rendered, which was approved on a 12-10 vote in a **House of Delegates'** committee. In other action, a pair of bills ([House Bill 123](#) and [Senate Bill 425](#)) to amend state law regarding ethical practices by health insurance carriers to address issues including claim denials and delayed payments to health care providers for medical treatment services – those bills unanimously cleared committee votes this week, with the House version winning approval from the full House. This is the third week of the 2024 legislative session in which [thousands of bills have been filed](#) for consideration during what is known as one of the “long” 60-day sessions that occur in even years. Lawmakers will consider and decide the fate of various legislative proposals during the session and craft a biennial budget to set state fiscal policy for a two-year period beginning on July 1, 2024. The VHHA Government Affairs team is stationed at the State Capitol throughout the session to engage with members of the legislature and the Administration of **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** in support of the interests of hospitals and health systems. – Julie Dime

[Back](#)

3. Register for 2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit in February

Register now for the **2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit**, which will be held as a virtual event on Feb. 22, 2024 from 9:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Having an innovative mindset in health care is in high demand right now. Health care delivery innovation is necessary to find new ways to improve quality, enhance the patient experience, expand safety initiatives, increase efficiency, and reduce costs. As hospitals and health systems pursue innovative solutions in all aspects of their care delivery and quality and safety improvement efforts, they are making real strides toward what the industry refers to as “quadruple aim” – higher quality of patient care with improved and equitable outcomes, increased value for both the patient and provider, improved patient satisfaction and an improved care provider experience. The 2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit will highlight the progress being made in that regard in Virginia and across the nation. Keynote speakers for the 2024 Summit include: **Dr. Aditi Mallick**, the Acting Director of the **CMS Office of Minority Health**, and **Bonnie Clipper**, DNP, MA, MBA, RN, CENP, FACHE, FAAN, an internationally recognized nurse futurist and nursing innovation expert. Registration for the 2024

Virginia Patient Safety Summit is free for staff and providers associated with Virginia hospitals and health systems, members of Virginia Patient Safety Summit partner organizations (Medical Society of Virginia, the Virginia Nurses Association, and the Virginia Pharmacists Association), federal and state health partner organizations and event sponsor organizations and students. Others may register for a fee of \$95. Visit this [link](#) for more details and event registration. To register, you may need to reset your password or create a new one (if you do not already have an account). Contact events@vhha.com if you encounter trouble registering an account or creating a new password. – Abraham Segres and Kristie Burnette

[Back](#)

4. VHHA Shared Services Announces Rebrand as ‘VHHA Solutions’

VHHA Solutions is the new name for VHHA Shared Services, a longstanding division of VHHA. This rebranding reflects the evolution of an organization that delivers operational solutions to support health care facilities and providers in achieving performance excellence while serving patients. That work is accomplished through relationships VHHA Solutions cultivates with vetted and endorsed vendor partners such as [Qualivis](#), a leader in sustainable workforce solutions tailored for hospitals and health care providers to address staffing challenges, and [Vizient](#), which specializes in a range of health care focused solutions including supply chain, pharmacy, growth, operations, care delivery excellence, and more. VHHA Solutions also partners with firms that offer insurance products ([RCM&D](#)), financial management tools and services ([AblePay](#)), reimbursement and payment programs ([CommerceHealthcare](#)), chronic care management ([ChartSpan](#)), information security ([KII Consulting](#)), financial analysis ([Pi2](#)), data analysis ([Hyve Health](#)), and readmission and discharge solutions ([SCP Health](#)). Each of these partners and their services are showcased to hospitals and health care providers in need of such offerings. Read more [here](#) and connect with VHHA Solutions [online](#) or through [LinkedIn](#).

[Back](#)

5. HHS, CMS Initiate Education Effort to Inform the Public About Rights Under EMTALA

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** and the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** recently announced a new series of actions intended to educate public audiences about patients’ rights to emergency medical care under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA). These actions include the publication of [new informational resources](#) on the CMS website about patient rights under EMTALA and the complaint process if emergency medical care is denied; efforts to partner with hospital and provider associations to disseminate training materials on providers’ EMTALA obligations; efforts to convene hospital and provider associations to discuss best practices and challenges in ensuring compliance with EMTALA; and the formation of a dedicated team of HHS experts to increase capacity to support hospitals in complying with federal EMTALA requirements. This plan has been developed in response to what is described as “a growing number of inquiries from patients and providers to CMS about how they can ensure that federal obligations were being met.” Read more [here](#).

[Back](#)

6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Highlights Virginia Health Insurance Marketplace

The latest episode of VHHA’s *Patients Come First* podcast features an interview with **Holly Mortlock**, Deputy Director of External Affairs and Policy with the **Virginia Health Insurance Marketplace** that is overseen by the **State Corporation Commission (SCC)**. She joins us for a conversation about her

professional background, the work of the SCC, Virginia’s health insurance marketplace, the recently concluded open enrollment period, 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](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [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 Saturday at noon and Sunday at 10 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to pcfpodcast@vhha.com. – Julian Walker

[Back](#)

7. VHHA Solutions Partners Offer Webinars on Chronic Care Management, Patient Affordability Gap

[VHHA Solutions](#) has announced new partnerships with two companies: [ChartSpan Medical Technologies](#) and [AblePay Health](#). [ChartSpan](#) is the largest, managed service provider of chronic care management programs in the U.S. and offers turnkey, managed care coordination and compliance programs including MIPS management and annual wellness visit solutions for doctors, clinics, and health systems. [AblePay](#) is the next generation of patient financial engagement programs taking an innovative, highly effective, yet surprisingly simple approach to assisting medical providers with the patient’s responsibility after insurance. Its program has improved the financial landscape for providers and their patients while enhancing the patient relationship and better their experience regarding receiving and paying for care. VHHA members are invited to join a webinar **ChartSpan** is hosting on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 1 p.m. focused on chronic care management (CCM). Join to learn about the biggest CCM trends of 2023, why more practices are likely to embrace CCM in 2024, and the specific benefits of CCM. Register for the webinar [here](#). VHHA members are also invited to join upcoming **AblePay** webinars focused on addressing the patient affordability gap. During the webinars, participants will learn how the AblePay solution can increase revenue while providing an overall better patient experience. Join to hear about provider case studies showing how the program positively changes patient payment behavior. The webinar will be offered twice. Register [here](#) to join on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 2 p.m., or register [here](#) to join on Friday, Feb. 9 at noon.

[Back](#)

8. CMS Finalizes Rule to Enhance Health Insurance Prior Authorization Process

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently finalized [regulations](#) designed to streamline the health plan prior authorization processes, promote greater transparency into medical necessity criteria, and improve the electronic exchange of health care information. The requirements apply to Medicare Advantage plans, state Medicaid fee-for-service (FFS) programs, Medicaid managed care plans, state Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) FFS programs, CHIP managed care entities, and qualified health plan issuers on the federally facilitated exchange. The rule requires impacted payers to implement and maintain several Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR)-based application programming interfaces (APIs) to improve the electronic exchange of data.

[Back](#)

9. Federal Agencies to Reopen Public Comment Period on Surprise Bills Dispute Resolution Process

HHS and the **U.S. Departments of Labor and Treasury** will plan to reopen the public comment period for a proposed rule to improve the No Surprises Act independent dispute resolution process. The public comment period will be available for 14 days beginning Jan. 22 to provide feedback. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

[Back](#)

10. Around the State

Mary Breslin-Rodriguez has been named Chief Quality Officer at **Ballad Health**. She has been a part of Ballad Health since June 2002 and previously served as the Director of Performance Improvement, Corporate Director of Patient Resource Management, and Corporate Director of Medical Services. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from Barry University. Read more [here](#).

Dana Weston Graves, President of **Sentara Princess Anne Hospital**, has been elected as an At-Large Delegate to the American Hospital Association's Regional Policy Board 3 (RPB 3).

Michelle Strider, RN, BSN, MBA, CPHQ, has been named Chief Nursing Officer of **UVA Community Health**. She has served as interim Chief Nursing Officer since July 2023. Strider earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Western Governors University and is a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality. She is a member of the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence Advisory Council**. Read more [here](#).

Walter Soto, Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager at **Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters** (CHKD), has been elected Chairman of the **Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition** (EVHC) Executive Advisory Committee. – Salinna Lor

[Back](#)
