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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**.
- Save the date for the **2024 Virginia Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Summit**, which is scheduled for April 24 at The Westin – Richmond. The theme for this year's Summit is "Human Caused Incidents" and it will feature speakers, panelists, sponsors, and support organizations focused on how the Virginia health care community can strengthen its preparedness for such situations. Visit this [link](#) for more information and contact Isaac Rife at irife@vhha.com to learn about sponsorship opportunities.
- Members of the VHHA team and hospital leaders from health systems across the Commonwealth recently travelled to Washington, D.C. for a series of meetings with members of Virginia's congressional delegation. Officials from **Carilion Clinic, Inova, UVA Health, Valley Health, VCU Health, VHC Health** spent two days in the nation's capital for meetings with the following congressional offices: **U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, U.S. Senator Mark Warner, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, U.S. Representative Don Beyer, U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith, U.S. Representative Jennifer Wexton, U.S. Representative Bob Good, U.S. Representative Abigail Spanberger, U.S. Representative Rob Wittman, U.S. Representative Bobby Scott, U.S. Representative Ben Cline, and U.S. Representative Jen Kiggans**. VHHA and hospital leaders made the trip to share their perspective on pending congressional legislative proposals including issues such as site neutral payment policy, health care price transparency,

and health care workforce safety, among other topics. View images of the congressional visits [here](#).

- The discussion during a recent meeting of the **VHHA Cybersecurity Committee** covered topics related to cybersecurity vulnerabilities as well as voluntary [cybersecurity performance goals for health care entities](#) and a new [gateway website](#) with information about implementing these goals in light of the growing cybersecurity threat to hospitals and health systems. The voluntary goals and web portal are provided by the **Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR)** of the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**. The release of the voluntary goals and gateway website follow a [December announcement from HHS](#) of its intent to introduce “new enforceable cybersecurity standards...that would be incorporated into existing programs, including Medicare and Medicaid and the HIPAA Security Rule.” Officials at VHHA member hospitals and health systems interested in nominating a technology leader to join the committee are encouraged to contact Ryan Lodata at rlodata@vhha.com.
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** recently released the calendar year 2025 [advance notice](#) of proposed changes to Medicare Advantage plan capitation rates and Part C and Part D payment policies. The agency estimates the proposal will increase plan revenues by an average 3.70 percent, amounting to a \$16 billion increase in overall payments (representing a -0.16 percent reduction in the 2025 benchmark rate compared to current policy). CMS expects to publish the final 2025 rate announcement by April 1. Read more [here](#).
- The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** is warning consumers, health care providers, and health care facilities not to use certain Cardinal Health Monoject luer-lock and enteral syringes following a product recall by the company. Read more [here](#).
- The Cell and Gene Therapy Access Model, which seeks to increase access to treatments for Medicaid enrollees with rare and severe diseases, will initially focus on sickle cell disease, CMS recently [announced](#). Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disorder affecting more than 100,000 Americans, most of whom are black and at least half of whom are enrolled in Medicaid. The model will begin in 2025.
- The **Pacific Americans with Disabilities Act Center** is hosting its annual conference as a virtual event on Feb. 27-28. The program includes presentations on ADA in health care settings such as effective communication requirements. View a conference agenda [here](#) and registration information is [here](#). Anyone interested in joining the peer group for ADA in health care settings, which is for health care personnel with responsibilities for ADA compliance, are encouraged to contact the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center at adatraining@transcen.org.

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2. Virginia General Assembly Arrives at ‘Crossover’ with Budget Action Pending

This week, the **Virginia General Assembly** reached the midway point of the 2024 legislation session. That point is known as “Crossover,” which is the day on the legislative calendar by which bills originating in one chamber – the **House of Delegates** or the **Virginia Senate** – must be formally approved and sent to the other chamber for consideration. Any bills not definitively acted upon by “Crossover” are functionally finished for the year. State budget legislation is an exception to that rule. This Sunday, members of the **House Appropriations Committee** and the **Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee** will unveil their versions of the budget legislation reflecting amendments to the two-year state budget blueprint proposed by **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** in December 2023. VHHA is advocating for budget amendments focused on the Virginia Trauma Fund, behavioral health and workforce development initiatives, and support for community health workers, among other items.

After presenting budget bills, each chamber will debate and ultimately vote on its version of the budget. Then, a select committee of legislators from the House and Senate known as “conferees” will be appointed to engage in negotiations to reconcile differences between the two bills and produce a compromise budget. That plan will then be presented in each chamber for debate and ultimately a vote for approval. Once approved, the budget will be sent to Governor Youngkin for his review, at which point he has the ability to amend elements of the budget bill. He can also reject budget provisions with a line-item veto. Legislators return to Richmond in April to consider and act upon the Governor’s changes to the budget. Throughout this process, the **VHHA Government Relations Team** will continue its vigorous engagement with legislators and the Youngkin Administration to advocate for budgetary action that supports Virginia hospitals, health systems, and community health in the Commonwealth. – Julie Dime

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3. Register for 2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit on Feb. 22

Register now for the **2024 Virginia Patient Safety Summit**, which will be held as a virtual event on Feb. 22 from 9:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m. The Summit theme is “Quadruple Aim: Innovation in Virginia Healthcare” and the registration deadline is Feb. 20. 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. Our thanks to Summit sponsors: [Sentara Health](#), [VCU Health](#), the [Language Group](#), [Qualivis](#), and [Vizient](#). – Abraham Segres and Kristie Burnette

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4. SAMHSA Issues Final Rules on Substance Use Record-Sharing, Opioid Treatment Medications

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA) recently issued a pair of final rules – one related to the [confidentiality of substance use disorder patient records](#) and another on [medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder](#). The rule pertaining to record confidentiality implements Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provisions to ensure health care providers have more complete and timely information when treating patients with substance use disorder. The rule updates patient consent requirements, aligns disclosure requirements with those

under HIPAA regulations, and enables providers to get patient consent just once to share substance use records for treatment and health care operations. The rule on medications pertains to opioid treatment program (OTP) accreditation, certification, and standards for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) with medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in OTPs. This includes making flexibilities put forth during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) permanent, as well as expanding access to care and evidence-based treatment for OUD. The final rule also removes all language and rules pertaining to the Drug Addiction and Treatment Act (DATA) Waiver from the regulations pursuant to the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.” The effective date of the final rule is April 2, 2024, and the compliance date is Oct. 2, 2024. In a related development, SAMHSA recently updated its [Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit](#) that includes basic information on overdose prevention and treatment as well as guidance and resources for health care providers and prescribers.

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5. HCA Virginia to Host Cardiovascular Symposium in March

“The Future of Medicine Now” is the title of an upcoming half-day symposium for health care professionals scheduled to be held March 23 at the Westin Hotel – Richmond. The conference will focus on the latest in leading-edge technology and research in cardiology and vascular medicine. Topics include treatment for arrhythmia, heart failure, valvular disease, vascular disease, and current research at **HCA Virginia**. The target audience includes physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, technologists, pharmacists, and emergency medical service providers. Continuing medical education credits will be provided. Visit this [link](#) for more information.

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Injury Recovery of Chesapeake Regional Cardiologist

The latest episode of VHHA’s *Patients Come First* podcast features **Dr. Frank Amico Jr.**, a heart failure, transplantation, interventional, and critical care cardiologist at **Chesapeake Regional Healthcare**. He joins us for a conversation about his career, shares his powerful personal story of recovery from serious brain and spinal cord injuries, 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

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7. CMS Updates Guidance for Hospitals on HIPAA-Compliant Text Message Information Sharing

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) has updated guidance for hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAH) to permit health care team members to share patient information and orders with each other through a HIPAA-compliant secure texting platform that complies with Medicare and Medicaid conditions of participation. Read more [here](#).

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8. Annual Regional Human Trafficking Summit Held at VCU School of Medicine

VHHA staff recently participated in the **Fourth Annual Regional Human Trafficking Summit** held over two days at the **VCU School of Medicine**. The Summit is held by the non-profit [Regional Interdisciplinary Collaborative Working to Disrupt Human Trafficking](#) (the RIC). It brought together stakeholders from across the U.S. including survivors, clinicians, academics, law enforcement, and advocacy professionals who are engaged in fighting human trafficking, a horrific practice and global criminal enterprise that can involve the labor or sexual exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion. This year's Summit provided participants the opportunity for shared learning, collaboration, and networking. Featured speakers during the event included **Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares**, former **U.S. Ambassador John Cotton Richmond**, **Virginia Senator Emily Jordan**, and representatives from the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**, the **Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect**, the **Salvation Army**, the **Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST)**, the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**, the Administration of **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin**, the **Baltimore Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement**, **Penn State University**, the **University of Maryland School of Social Work**, **Sentara Health**, and many others. View event photos [here](#).

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9. CMS Issues Proposed Rule on Oversight of Accreditation Organizations

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** recently released a proposed rule to strengthen oversight of organizations that accredit health care providers certified by Medicare and Medicaid. The rule would prohibit accrediting organizations from giving a hospital or other health care facility advance notice of a survey, penalize hospitals that receive a condition-level citation during a validation survey conducted by state surveyors on behalf of CMS, and require accrediting organizations to use the CMS conditions of participation as minimum accreditation standards. The rule would also revise the survey process for psychiatric hospitals, among other provisions. CMS will publish the rule in the Feb. 15 Federal Register, with comments due by April 15. Read more [here](#).

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10. Around the State

Dr. Kurt Newman, President Emeritus of **Children's National Hospital**, has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from **Press Ganey**. This executive award honors one individual who has been an influential leader in their organization and community over the course of their career.

Janelle Padgett has been named Chief Financial Officer for **Fauquier Health**. Padgett most recently served as assistance vice president of financial reporting and budget operations at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and has more than 25 years of health care experience in both for-profit and not-for-profit health care systems.

Toni Maxwell has been named Chief Nursing Officer for **Fauquier Health**. She brings more than 20 years of experience in the health care industry. Maxwell holds a bachelor's of science degree in biology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, an associate's of applied science degree in nursing from Chattanooga State Community College, and a master's of science degree in nursing from Middle Tennessee State University.

The **American Society for Health Care Engineering** will present a 2024 Vista Awards to **Inova Fairfax Hospital** for its work to create optimal health care environments. – Salinna Lor

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