

FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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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**.
- **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](#).
- The fourth annual **Insights Into Autism** conference is being held today (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 provides 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.

- 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.
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** recently finalized [regulations](#) designed to streamline the health plan prior authorization process, 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.
- The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** and the **U.S. Departments of Labor and Treasury** recently reopened the public comment period for a proposed rule to improve the No Surprises Act independent dispute resolution process. The public comment period is available for 14 days beginning Jan. 22 to provide feedback. The comment deadline is Feb. 5. Read more [here](#) and [here](#) and submit comments through this [link](#).
- **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 **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 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.
- 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 [VPM](#), [Cardinal News](#), [WHSV](#), the [Virginia Mercury](#), [Blue Virginia](#), and the [Virginia Star](#).

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2. Take Action to Oppose Legislation Weakening Medical Malpractice Cap

VHHA is encouraging hospital team members to take action to urge legislators to reject a bill that would weaken Virginia's existing medical malpractice law. A bill pending in the **Virginia General Assembly** ([Senate Bill 493](#)) would remove the medical malpractice cap in cases involving patients 10 years old and younger. Under current law, the medical malpractice award cap is uniformly applied. This proposed law change represents a significant threat to health care access and affordability by potentially resulting in excessive damage awards that raise the cost of malpractice insurance to levels that could reduce the availability of providers offering specialty services, particularly in rural and underserved communities. VHHA supports the presence of a health care liability system that provides accountability and fair compensation in the rare instances when mistakes occur. Visit this [link](#) to quickly and easily e-mail your local legislator to ask them to oppose SB 493 and maintain the current system. The process is simple and takes seconds. Just enter some basic information such as name and address and then click the "send message" button and an e-mail will be sent to your local legislator expressing your concerns about the potential impact of this legislation. – Julie Dime

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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 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

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4. Virginians See Rising Insurance Costs Despite State Health Care Spending Below National Average

When it comes to health care spending, Virginia is in the enviable position of having expenditure rates that remain well below national levels. The same cannot be said for health insurance costs, unfortunately. On the contrary, the amount that individuals and families across the Commonwealth spend on annual health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket deductibles continues to rise sharply year-over-year. Meanwhile, the gap between what individuals and families pay for insurance, and what insurance companies pay for health care services, continues to widen. Those findings are part of a [new report from the non-partisan research firm Altarum](#) that examines 2022 health spending in Virginia based on data from the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**, Virginia’s All-Payer Claims Database, and other public sources. The Altarum analysis shows that the average single health insurance premium in 2022 was \$7,400 and the average family health insurance premium was \$21,400 for people with private sector employer-sponsored health care coverage. When the average cost of deductibles is included, the averages increase to “\$9,400 for single coverage and \$25,200 for family coverage.” The report further notes that “premiums for single coverage of a private-sector employee are up 76.6 percent and family premiums are 79.3 percent higher” since 2008. When increases in cost-sharing co-pays and deductibles for single and family plans are factored in, total plans costs in 2022 were 89.1 percent higher over that span in both categories. Those increases have been a consistent trend, as a [previous Altarum report](#) on 2021 health care spending in Virginia similarly found significant growth in the total average cost of single and family health insurance premiums as well as growth in out-of-pocket costs. While insurance costs impacting Virginia families and employers are rising, growth in total health spending has been restrained: personal health care spending in the Commonwealth remains below national averages across several measures including total spending as a percent of state gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita health care spending. The Altarum report found that “Virginia’s total health spending” as a percent of GDP “mainly stayed constant between 2015 and 2020 but has been declining in 2021 and 2022.” In fact, the share of state GDP spent on health care declined from 15.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 14.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, reflecting an amount of spending in Virginia that “is the lowest since 2011 and well below the national average.” Read more [here](#).

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5. Register for Pacific ADA Center Virtual Conference in Late February

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 adatrain@transcen.org.

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6. VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features VCU Health Music Therapist

The latest episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features an interview with **Mollie Luck**, a music therapist at **VCU Health**. She joins us for a conversation about the role of music therapy in clinical settings, working with patients, a program at VCU to record the heartbeats of patients nearing the end of life, 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 pcf@vhha.com. – Will Selden

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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.

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8. CDC Maternal Practices in Infant Nutrition Care Survey Available to Hospitals

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) 2024 [Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care \(mPINC\)](#) survey launched in January. 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 e-mail mPINC@cdc.gov and include the full name and e-mail address of the facility maternal health lead.

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9. FDA Revises Emergency Use Authorization for Paxlovid COVID Medication

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) recently announced a revision to the emergency use authorization (EUA) indicating that Paxlovid manufactured and labeled in accordance with the EUA currently in U.S. distribution will remain authorized for use through the labeled or extended expiration date, as applicable, or through March 8, 2024, whichever is earlier. In December 2021, FDA authorized Paxlovid for emergency use for the treatment of adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age and older weighing at least 40 kg) who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. In May 2023, FDA approved Pfizer's new drug application (NDA) for Paxlovid for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. EUA-labeled Paxlovid will no longer be authorized for emergency use after March 8, 2024, regardless of the labeled or extended expiration date. However, the Paxlovid EUA will continue to authorize emergency use of Paxlovid manufactured and labeled in accordance with the NDA (NDA-labeled Paxlovid) for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in pediatric patients (12 years of age and older weighing at least 40 kg) who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. This revision to the Paxlovid EUA is the next phase in the transition from the use of EUA-labeled Paxlovid to the use of NDA-labeled Paxlovid. Read more [here](#).

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10. Around the State

Dr. Michael J. Dacey, MD, President and CEO of **Riverside Health System** and a member of the **VHHA Board of Directors**; **Eric Deaton**, Chief Operating Officer of **Ballad Health** and Chair of the VHHA Board of Directors; **Eric Fletcher**, a Senior Vice President at **Mary Washington Healthcare**; **Mary N. Mannix**, FACHE, President and CEO of **Augusta Health** and a member of the VHHA Board of Directors; and **Jennifer Siciliano**, Chief External Affairs Officer for **UVA Health**, have been selected to serve on the Board of Directors for the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce**. Read more [here](#).

Leah Booth with **Riverside Walter Reed Hospital** has been named a recipient of the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** "Virginians Speak Up for Safety" Award for the fourth quarter of 2023. The award recognizes hospital team members who speak up to protect patients and staff from potential harm, even when doing so may be difficult. In Booth's case, she took action to facilitate additional review of a patient's radiology exam results.

Toni R. Ardabell, Chief of Clinical Enterprise Operations for **Inova Health System**, is one of eight Penn State University alumni to receive a Distinguished Alumni Award, the institution's highest honor presented to alumni. Read more [here](#).

Sean Mills has joined **Ballad Health** to serve as the Chief Financial Officer for its Northern Region. He previously served as Vice President of Finance for Ascension Florida & Gulf Coast (AFGC). Sean holds a master's degree with a healthcare concentration from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Le Moyne College. Read more [here](#). – Salinna Lor

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