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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, these are some developments of interest to Virginia hospitals and health systems:

### **Register for the 2025 Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Leaders Summit in November**

- Registration is open for the **2025 Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Leaders Summit** scheduled for Nov. 5-7, 2025 at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, VA. "Insight. Innovation. Impact." is the theme of the Summit presented by **VHHA** and the **VHHA Foundation**. It reflects the powerful journey from bold ideas to meaningful change. The Summit agenda features

dynamic keynote speakers, policy conversations, and inspiring peer recognition. It is a platform to explore what's next in healthcare delivery. From navigating federal developments to showcasing homegrown breakthroughs, the Summit will examine how insight drives innovation — and how innovation drives results. Attend the Summit to be part of the conversation that shapes the future of care in Virginia and beyond. Visit this [link](#) to see the program lineup and to register.

#### **VHHA Shares Virginia Behavioral Health Report, Behavioral Health Summit Recap Video**

- The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) is publicly sharing a new report — [“Behavioral Health in Virginia: Transforming Access, Care, and Outcomes”](#) — that highlights how hospitals and health systems are leading on innovation, supporting communities, and strengthening the health care delivery system. The [report](#) was initially shared with attendees at the seventh annual [Virginia Behavioral Health Summit](#) held on Sept. 25, 2025 in Richmond and it is now available to the public. It provides information about Virginia's behavioral health hospitals, types of treatment services, how care is covered and reimbursed, financial and regional challenges, state policy considerations, data charts illustrating some of those trends, information about crisis services, and more. VHHA's behavioral health report is being released alongside a highlight video from the 2025 Virginia Behavioral Health Summit, whose theme was “Community: Building an Accessible System of Care Across the Continuum.” The Summit convened clinicians, hospital leaders, advocates, and policymakers to explore innovative models for access, crisis service expansion, and practical tools for patient care. View the video recap [here](#) and read more through this [link](#).

#### **VHHA Hosts Meeting of Payor Advisory Committee**

- This week, VHHA held a meeting of the **Payor Advisory Committee**. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges. Contact **Craig Connors** at [cconnors@vhha.com](mailto:cconnors@vhha.com) to inquire about the committee.

#### **VHHA Encourages Hospital Staff to Consider Applying for Sorensen Political Leaders Program**

- As part of its partnership with the **Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership** at the **University of Virginia**, VHHA encourages hospital staff and leaders to apply for the 2026 Political Leaders Program. Applications are being accepted until Dec. 5 under an [extended deadline](#). The 2026 cohort program will run from March-December. Visit this [link](#) for more information and to access the program application. In 2020, VHHA [entered into a partnership with Sorensen](#) to support its programming and help identify health care leaders who are strong candidates for the Political Leaders Program. The program draws applicants from across the state and focuses on Virginia politics and governing, policy issues and solutions, regional needs, ethical servant leadership, and efforts to unite the Commonwealth. This program is primarily focused on individuals who are 10-plus years removed from college. Prospective program applicants from VHHA member hospitals or health systems are encouraged to contact VHHA President and CEO **Sean T. Connaughton** at [sconnaughton@vhha.com](mailto:sconnaughton@vhha.com) to discuss this opportunity and the ways in which VHHA can support applicants.

#### **VHHA Issues Call for 2026 Patient Safety Summit Poster Abstract Submissions**

- Ahead of the **2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit**, VHHA invites staff from member hospitals and health systems to submit poster abstracts showcasing evidence-based quality and safety improvement projects. Submitted abstracts topics may include patient safety, quality improvement, and safety culture; care coordination, patient experience and patient-family engagement; population and community health; and workforce safety and well-being. Abstracts should be 400 words or less and should include tables, graphs, control charts, process maps, or key program drivers. Abstracts should contain data – those that don’t will be excluded from consideration – and describe the problem, the intervention, results, and conclusions. The authors of selected abstracts will have the opportunity to record a video slide presentation with VHHA prior to the Summit and those videos will be shared on the online conference platform for attendees to view on-demand during the 2026 Patient Safety Summit, whose theme is “Safe Care, Every Step of the Way: Advancing a Culture of Safety in Healthcare.” The submission deadline is today (Friday, Oct. 24, 2025). Contact **Rachel Pryor** at [rpryor@vhha.com](mailto:rpryor@vhha.com) with questions.

#### **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 is reflected in recent coverage from [WWBT](#), the [Virginia Mercury](#), [DC News Now](#), and [WCAV](#).

## **News Updates**

#### **CMS Permits Processing of Medicare PFS, FQHC, Telehealth Claims During Shutdown**

This week, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** [announced](#) that the agency is instructing Medicare administrative contractors to begin processing claims dated Oct. 1 and after which had been [on hold due to the federal government shutdown](#). That includes claims paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS), ground ambulance transport claims, and Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) claims. That also applies to telehealth claims that CMS can confirm are for behavioral and mental health services. Payment of those claims had been halted amid the federal government shutdown that is now in its fourth week. In other news, CMS [indicates](#) as part of its contingency plan that it has “sufficient funding for Medicaid to fund the first quarter of FY 2026” in the absence of a deal to continue funding government operations.

#### **Virginia Governor Declares Emergency over Expiring SNAP Benefits Due to Shutdown**

This week, **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** [declared a state of emergency](#) ahead of the anticipated expiration of funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits on Nov. 1. SNAP is a government program that helps low-income households buy food from authorized retailers. In a statement, the Governor said issuing the declaration enables him to spend emergency funds to help support access to food for as many as 850,000 Virginians who benefit from SNAP. The statement also blamed “Congressional Democrats” for the federal government shutdown that began Oct. 1 when Congress was unable to reach a deal to continue funding the government. Health care funding and policy, including a debate over extending expiring enhanced premium tax credits to help individuals

purchase ACA marketplace insurance plans, is a sticking point in the talks over ending the shutdown and funding the government.

### **Virginia State Health Commissioner Offers Vaccine Guidance Following CDC Updates**

In a recent [letter](#) to clinicians, **Virginia State Health Commissioner Dr. Karen M. Shelton**, MD, shared updated guidance on COVID-19 and MMRV vaccination following adult and child immunization schedule revisions from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**. The [immunization schedule updates](#) reflect recent recommendations from the **CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)**. The CDC now encourages people “to apply individual-based decision-making” regarding COVID-19 vaccination. The agency also recommends “that toddlers receive protection from varicella (chickenpox) as a standalone immunization rather than in combination with measles, mumps, and rubella vaccination.” The Commissioner’s letter to clinicians calls vaccines “essential to the health of communities in Virginia” and notes that the COVID-19 and MMRV “vaccines have been through rigorous testing and continuous evaluations and have been demonstrated as safe and effective. These vaccines also protect those who are unable to be vaccinated.”

### **Federal Government Offers H-1B Visa Guidance Following Presidential Proclamation**

This week, **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** shared [guidance](#) regarding a recent presidential proclamation [seeking to reform](#) the H-1B visa program to require a \$100,000 payment for new H-1B visa petitions. The guidance indicates that fee will only apply to new visa applicants from outside the U.S. The proclamation stated that the policy does not apply to previously issued H-1B visas and does not prevent international travel by such visa holders. Physicians from other nations seeking to practice medicine in the U.S. are among the professionals who seek these visas. Following the initial proclamation, some [published reports](#) suggested physicians could qualify for exemptions from the new standard.

### **Deadline Approaching for Public Comment Period on AI Federal Regulations**

The federal **Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)** has [requested input](#) from interested parties in identifying existing federal statutes, regulations, agency rules, guidance, forms, and administrative processes that unnecessarily hinder the development, deployment, and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in the U.S. OSTP is seeking input from the public, including private sector organizations, industry groups, academia, state, local, and tribal governments, and other interested parties, on priorities for such regulatory reform or other agency action necessary to promote AI innovation and adoption. Public comments may be submitted through this [link](#). The deadline to submit comments is Oct. 27.

### **Medicare Annual Enrollment Period Active Through Dec. 7**

The [Medicare open enrollment period](#) for 2026 recently began and continues through Dec. 7. During this period, eligible individuals can enroll or disenroll from Medicare Advantage plans, change drug plans, and more. Earlier this year, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** [indicated](#) that it anticipates premium and drug plan cost stability for 2026 coverage. In 2025, [CMS data](#) shows that of the 69 million Americans enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B, about 51 percent were in Medicare Advantage plans. VHHA has additional information about Medicare on its website, including official government

documentation, and educational resources on plan feature comparison charts, frequently asked questions, and more. Visit this [link](#) to learn more and access the available resources.

## Events

### **VASHRM to Host In-Person Fall Education Day on Nov. 5 at VHHA Offices**

The **Virginia Chapter of the American Society for Healthcare Risk Management (VASHRM)** will host an in-person Fall Education Day event on Nov. 5 (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) at VHHA offices in Glen Allen, VA. The event is open to professionals in healthcare risk management, quality, patient safety, and healthcare leadership. VASHRM is committed to advancing safe, trusted, and patient-centered care by promoting proactive and innovative approaches to managing risk across healthcare organizations. Featured topics for the Fall Education Day lineup include “Virginia Code and Workplace Violence,” “Strengthening Provider Communications,” “AI in Clinical and Operational Settings,” and “When to Settle – Pre-Litigation Demands.” Visit this [link](#) for more event details and to register.

### **VHHA to Host Nov. 18 ‘Earn While You Learn’ In-Person Workshop for Virginia Hospitals**

Hospitals seeking to fill allied health vacancies are encouraged to participate in an upcoming workshop whose programming is focused on supporting hospitals in meeting evolving workforce needs through the innovative “Earn While You Learn” model. During the workshop, representatives from the **UVA Health** “Earn While You Learn” team will deliver a presentation about their program designed to help fill a range of health care roles from entry-level support positions to advanced clinical pathways, including allied health positions. Workshop participants will learn how that model can be adapted and applied by other organizations in a tailored way to meet specific workforce needs. The in-person workshop is scheduled for Nov. 18 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at VHHA offices in Glen Allen, VA. Visit this [link](#) to register. Contact VHHA Director of Workforce Initiatives **Sharon Alexander** at [salexander@vhha.com](mailto:salexander@vhha.com) with any questions.

### **VAFCC to Host 2025 Annual Conference Nov. 16-18 in Roanoke**

The **Virginia Association of Free & Charitable Clinics (VAFCC)** is scheduled to host its 2025 Annual Conference from Nov. 16-18 in Roanoke, VA. The conference theme is “Sustaining Care in Turbulent Times: Bolstering the Healthcare Safety Net” and the event will focus on equipping free and charitable clinics with the tools, insights, and partners needed to build long-term financial and operational sustainability. That includes putting a spotlight on strategies and practices that fuel clinic growth, empowering them to move beyond survival and toward long-term impact despite rising demand and limited resources. Registration is open through Nov. 3. Learn more through this [link](#).

## Podcast

### **VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Cancer Survivor, Men’s Support Group Advocate**

This episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Kevin Johnson**, a retired teacher and cancer survivor who is active in expanding [Man Up To Cancer](#) support groups in Virginia. He joins us for a conversation about his post-retirement medical challenges, collaboration with the **Sentara Health Brock Cancer Center**, and the work to grow Man Up To Cancer chapters to support men facing cancer diagnoses. 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](#), [TuneIn](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Blubrry](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Deezer](#), [Podbay](#), [Pocket Casts](#), the [Virginia Audio Collective](#), and the [World Podcast Network](#). The podcast can also be heard on the radio airwaves – episodes air Sundays at 9 a.m. on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to [pcfpodcast@vhha.com](mailto:pcfpodcast@vhha.com).



## Around the State



**Ballad Health** has selected **Rebecca Beck** as CEO of **Johnson City Medical Center**, effective Nov. 2. Beck, who has served as CEO of Ballad Health's Holston Valley Medical Center and Indian Path Community Hospital since 2022, was selected after a broad regional and national search. In 2022, Beck was named one of "60 Rural Hospital CEOs to Know" by *Becker's Hospital Review* – the only honoree from Tennessee or Virginia that year. Read more [here](#).

**Renee Bloom**, MSN, RNC-NIC, RNC-LRN, a NICU RN Unit Supervisor at **Inova Fair Oaks Hospital**, has been named the 2025 National Magnet Nurse of the Year® in the category of New Knowledge, Innovations, and Improvements by the **American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)**. The Magnet Nurse of the Year® Awards honor five outstanding nurses from Magnet-recognized organizations across the nation who exemplify excellence in nursing practice and innovation across key areas of the Magnet® Model. Bloom was recognized during the ANCC Magnet & Pathway Conference™ held in Atlanta, GA for her pioneering work in advancing neonatal care through research-driven innovations and evidence-based practice improvements. Read more [here](#).



**Loren Smith** was recently named Vice President of Operations at **Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center**. She previously served as Director of Patient Care Services - Operations for **Sentara Health** among other roles with the health system. She earned an undergraduate degree from Christopher Newport University and a master's degree in public health from Eastern Virginia Medical School.

**Sentara Health**, a not-for-profit system with 12 hospitals, ambulatory and health plan divisions, and 34,000 employees, recently elected two accomplished health care leaders to its Board of Directors. The new Board members include **C. Brian Shipp** of Nashville, TN, and **Heyward R.**

**Donigan** of Virginia Beach, VA. Shipp is Founder and President of CBS Advisors, LLC, which advises health care-related companies on investment, growth, mission, and strategy. Shipp previously served as senior vice president with Elevance/Anthem and in roles with United Healthcare. Donigan is CEO of Health Network One, which curates value-based specialty care networks for payers. She has served as president and CEO of Rite Aid, Sapphire Digital, and Value Options and has held senior leader roles with Cigna and Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Read more [here](#).

