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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**

- Register now 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 Hosts Meeting of Hospital Communication Officers Committee**

- VHHA recently held a meeting of the **Virginia Hospital Communication Officers Committee**. The Committee is a forum for hospital communications and marketing leaders to discuss issues related to hospital issue and perception management as well as communication and marketing strategy. Contact **Julian Walker** at [jwalker@vhha.com](mailto:jwalker@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 professionals 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 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 the [Augusta Free Press](#), [WAMU](#), and the [Virginia Star](#).

## **News Updates**

### **Deadline Approaching for Hospitals to Apply for State Breastfeeding Designation Program**

Nov. 1 is the deadline to submit an application for the **Virginia Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Program**. The Virginia Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Program is the state designation program based on Baby-Friendly USA's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. These steps help birthing facilities review and celebrate actions being taken to promote breastfeeding for the families they serve. The program asks participating hospitals to submit data related to the Ten Steps. Participation in the program is voluntary – there is no cost associated with applying or earning a

Breastfeeding-Friendly designation and no site visits are required. The application process is virtual. Visit this [link](#) for more information about the program, including the application process.

### **HHS OIG Finds Medicare Advantage, Medicaid Plans Have Limited Behavioral Health Options**

A recent [report](#) from the **U.S. House and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG)** concludes that many Medicare Advantage and Medicaid managed care plans have limited behavioral health provider networks and inactive providers who don't provide services to enrollees. The report recommends the use of data to monitor provider networks, efforts to improve network directory accuracy, and exploration of how a national directory might reduce inaccuracies and increase efficiency for patients and providers. Read more [here](#). A [separate analysis by KFF](#) found that Medicare advantage enrollees "were in a plan that included just under half (48%) of all physicians available to traditional Medicare beneficiaries in their area in 2022, on average."

### **KFF Health Benefits Survey Shows 6 Percent Increase in Annual Family Premiums for Employer Plans**

A recent [KFF analysis](#) shows that annual premiums for employer-provided family health coverage have increased 6 percent from 2024, reaching \$26,993. The analysis found that on average, workers contributed \$6,850 towards the cost of coverage and that the average deductible was \$1,886 for single coverage. The KFF analysis is based on results from the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Employer Health Benefits Survey. Read more [here](#). A separate annual [assessment of Virginia health insurance costs](#) has likewise shown that Virginia families and individuals have endured [double-digit percentage increases](#) in health insurance premium costs in recent years, with annual private health insurance premiums in Virginia increasing 20.2 percent for single individuals and 22.1 percent for families from 2019-2023.

### **FDA Draft Guidance Proposes Updates to Accelerate Biosimilar Development**

This week, the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** [announced](#) efforts to accelerate the development and lower the costs for developing biosimilar medicines. That includes new [draft guidance](#) from FDA that proposed updates to simplify biosimilarity studies and reduce unnecessary clinical testing. The FDA is also pursuing efforts to make it easier for biosimilars to be developed as interchangeable with brand-name biologics to help patients and pharmacists with access to lower-cost options.

### **ACA Marketplace Health Plan Open Enrollment for 2026 Coverage Set to Begin Nov. 1**

The [open enrollment period](#) for people to purchase 2026 health coverage plans on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace begins Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025 and continues until Jan. 15, 2026. In 2025, nearly 389,000 Virginians enrolled in coverage through [Virginia's Insurance Marketplace](#). What is different about this cycle is that the enrollment period is two weeks shorter than last year and fewer people may have access to financial support that helps subsidize the cost of purchasing coverage. For the past several years, enhanced premium tax credits (EPTC) approved by Congress have helped qualified individuals purchase coverage on the marketplace. Those EPTCs are set to expire at the end of this year if Congress doesn't extend them. Anticipating EPTC expiration, health insurance companies that offer marketplace plans have proposed rate increases for plan year 2026 in Virginia and beyond. In August, the **Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC)** [announced](#) that many health insurers offering individual and small group coverage marketplace plans have requested rate increases, with many proposing average increases of 20 percent or more. It has been projected that as many as one-fourth of the Virginians who now have marketplace plans could lose coverage if the enhanced premium tax

credits expire. Nationally, an [analysis](#) by Peterson-KFF showed that “across 312 insurers participating in the ACA Marketplaces from the 50 states and the District of Columbia” there is “a median proposed premium increase of 18 percent.” The study indicates that is a sharp increase from last year and “the largest rate change insurers have requested since 2018.” The SCC also noted that insurers requested an average 11.2 percent rate increase for small group rates in 2026. A debate between Democrats and Republicans in Congress over EPTC extension is one of the issues that remains in contention as part of the ongoing federal government shutdown that began Oct. 1.

### **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 VHHA Summit Keynote Speaker, Physician-Pharmaceutical Leader**

This episode of VHHA’s *Patients Come First* podcast features **Dr. Eric Edwards**, Chief Executive Officer of **Phlow Corp.**, a pioneering public benefit pharmaceutical company. Dr Edwards is a keynote speaker at the upcoming **Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Leaders Summit** scheduled for Nov. 5-7, 2025 in Hot Springs, VA. The conversation with Dr. Edwards covers his work as a clinician and entrepreneur, efforts to boost production of essential medicines in the U.S., and previews his remarks at the upcoming Summit. 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



**Jeniece Roane**, PhD, RN, NE-BC, has been appointed as the interim Chief Operating Officer for **VCU Medical Center**. She started in the role in late September. Roane has been a registered nurse for 32 years. Her clinical background is in pediatrics and pediatric critical care. She has held formal leadership roles in nursing and hospital administration since 2002, most recently serving as the vice president of operations for **Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU**. From 2020 through 2022, Roane served as the interim chief nursing officer for VCU Medical Center. She is the 2024 recipient of the Paul A. and Veronica H. Gross Achievement Award, recognizing her substantial contributions to nursing. In 2021, Roane was recognized as the YWCA’s Outstanding Woman in Health and Science for the Richmond Region and, in 2015, she was recognized by VCU Health colleagues for her

transformational leadership style. Roane is a board member of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Richmond and Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now). Read more [here](#).

**Riverside Health** has announced upcoming leadership transitions within its hospital division. Beginning in November, **Nick Chuquín**, President of **Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital** (RSMH), will assume a new role as Vice President of Operations at **Riverside Regional Medical Center**. Chuquín has served as President of RSMH since July 2021, leading the hospital for more than four years. **Kristie Finney**, PhD, MBA, who has been serving as Senior Director for Quality and Laboratory Services at RSMH, will step into the role of Interim President of RSMH in November. Read more [here](#).



**Dr. Lowell Frank**, MD, has been awarded the 2025 Maria Serratto Master Educator Award by the American Academy of Pediatrics – Section on Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery. This prestigious honor recognizes exceptional leadership in teaching and mentorship in pediatric cardiology. Dr. Frank has been part of **Children's National Hospital** for nearly 20 years, initially arriving for fellowships in pediatric cardiology and advanced imaging. Read more [here](#).

**Dr. Ryan Tomberg**, MD, has been appointed Medical Director at **Sentara Leigh Hospital**. Dr. Tomberg joined Emergency Physicians of Tidewater (EPT) in 2020 and has served as EPT's Observation Medical Director since 2022. He earned his medical degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School, where he also completed residency, and he is board certified by the American Board of Emergency Medicine.

