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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:

### **VHEMP Hosts Webinar with National Weather Service on Anticipated Winter Conditions**

- This week, the **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP)** hosted a winter weather briefing webinar with the **National Weather Service (NWS)**. VHEMP is a partnership between the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**, the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)**, and the four Regional Healthcare Coalitions. The webinar featured **Katie Carter**, Emergency Response Specialist with NWS, who provided an overview of the upcoming winter weather season forecast from mid-December through March as well as resources

available to prepare for and monitor events. View a webinar recording [here](#) and presentation slides through this [link](#).

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

- 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.

### **VHHA Shares 2025 Holiday Video Card with Members**

- The holiday season is a time to be thankful for our blessings. Here at VHHA, we are grateful for the dedicated caregivers and health care professionals who work in hospitals across Virginia to help keep people healthy. To mark the season, VHHA recently shared its 2025 holiday video card to wish everyone a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. View the 2025 holiday video card [here](#).

### **VHHA Shares Video from 2025 Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Leaders Summit**

- VHHA recently released a [highlight video](#) that recaps sights and sounds from the **2025 Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Leaders Summit** held Nov. 5-7, 2025 at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, VA. “Insight. Innovation. Impact.” was the theme of the Summit presented by the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)** and the **VHHA Foundation**. View a Summit program brochure [here](#). View the awards luncheon program [here](#) and read more about the VHHA Outstanding Service Awards, including past winners, through this [link](#). Read more about the event [here](#) and view a Summit photo gallery through this [link](#).

## **News Updates**

### **Governor Youngkin Unveils State Budget Proposal**

This week, **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** shared his [proposed two-year state budget](#) during an address to the **General Assembly’s** money committees. The Governor’s budget proposal is traditionally the starting point for the legislature to go through its process of updating the state spending plan. In this instance, however, Governor Youngkin is offering a budget plan with his four-year term coming to a close in January. Of concern, the introduced budget includes policy and funding proposals affecting hospital participation in Medicaid, the delivery of maternal and acute care services, and the implementation of new federal Medicaid eligibility requirements. In 2026, the General Assembly will have a larger Democratic majority in the **House of Delegates** following the November elections. And the term of **Governor-elect Abigail Spanberger** commences in mid-January. So, the incoming crop of state lawmakers may take a different approach to state fiscal affairs than the plan offered by the departing Governor. Either way, the state economic outlook appears austere with slowed growth attributable to federal tariffs and domestic spending policy, as well as the impact of AI and data centers on job growth, among other factors.

### **White House Issues Executive Order on Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework**

**U.S. President Donald J. Trump** recently issued an [executive order](#) calling for a national policy framework on artificial intelligence as part of a broader effort to “promote United States national and economic security and dominance across many domains.” The order states that U.S. “AI companies must be free to innovate without cumbersome regulation” and contends that “excessive state regulation” across “a patchwork of 50 different regulatory regimes” can be an impediment to innovation. It calls for a federal review of all state laws inconsistent with the White House policy as well as legal action to challenge such state laws. It further calls for “a legislative recommendation establishing a uniform federal policy framework for AI that preempts state AI laws” in conflict with the established federal standard.

### **CMS Proposed Rule Seeks Updates to Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model**

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) recently shared a proposed rule on changes to the Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model that would take effect July 1, 2026. The proposed changes reflect updates to the 2024 final rule and include modifying the eligible kidney transplant hospital criteria, raising the low-volume threshold from 11 kidney transplants performed annually during each baseline year to 15, and updating the composite graft survival rate metric. Public comment on the proposed rule is being accepted through Feb. 9, 2026. Read more [here](#).

### **HHS Announces Plan to Prevent Hospitals from Offering Gender Care to Youths**

This week, the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) [announced](#) proposed regulatory action seeking “to end the practice of sex-rejecting procedures on children.” As part of that effort, HHS said the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) plans to issue “a notice of proposed rulemaking to bar hospitals from performing sex-rejecting procedures on children under age 18 as a condition of participation in Medicare and Medicaid programs.” The HHS announcement follows an [executive order](#) **U.S. President Donald J. Trump** issued in January that sought to block such gender services. The executive order was later [challenged in federal court](#).

### **CDC Adopts Revised Guidance on Hepatitis B Vaccine for Infants**

This week, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) [adopted](#) a [recommendation](#) from **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices** (ACIP) regarding guidance on the administration of the hepatitis B vaccine to certain newborns. The revised guidance calls for “individual-based decision-making” as parents evaluate whether to have a hepatitis B vaccine dose administered to infants born to women who test negative for the virus. Organizations including the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the [American Board of Pediatrics](#), and the [American Medical Association](#) have issued statements that are circumspect about the new guidance.

## **Events**

### **Save the Date for the 2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit in February**

Save the date for the **2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit**, which will be held as a virtual event on Feb. 26, 2026. The Summit will highlight innovative work in Virginia and across the nation to advance a culture of safety and continuous improvement in health care with a focus on how shared values and behaviors can minimize errors, improve outcomes, and enhance the overall quality and experience of

care. Beginning in 2026, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** will require all U.S. hospitals participating in Medicare or Medicaid to attest to patient safety structural measures that assess strategies to strengthen systems for safety, including leadership commitment to eliminating preventable harm, supporting a culture of safety and learning health systems, accountability and transparency, and patient and family engagement. Registration for the Summit will open soon. The **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** is hosting this event in partnership with the **Virginia Nurses Foundation**, the **Medical Society of Virginia**, the **Virginia Pharmacists Association**, and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists**.

## Podcast

### VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Michigan Health Council's ACEMAPP Clinical Rotation Program

This episode of VHHA's *Patients Come First* podcast features **Stacy Gradowski**, Director of Business Development at the **Michigan Health Council**, who joins us for a conversation about health care workforce development, the **ACEMAPP** platform to support providers with clinical rotation planning and scheduling, partnering with **VHHA Solutions**, 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](#), [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



*Blanton*



*Dzuba*



*Morrell*



*Westmoreland*

**Becca Blanton**, Children's Miracle Network Manager for the **Ballad Health Foundation**; **James Dzuba**, Operations Manager with **Ballad Health**; **Morgan Morrell**, a member of the Marketing and Communications Leadership Team at Ballad Health; and **Alisha Westmoreland**, Director of Process

Improvement and Clinical Outcomes Optimization with Ballad Health, have all been named to the 2025 40 Under 40 list by *The Business Journal of Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia*. Read more [here](#).



*Saavedra*



*Kates*

**Dr. Arturo Saavedra**, MD, PhD, dean of the **VCU School of Medicine** and Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, has agreed to serve as VCU's Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Saavedra came to VCU from the **UVA School of Medicine**, where he was the Kenneth E. Greer Endowed Professor and Chair in Dermatology and the President and Interim Chief Executive Officer for the University Physicians' Group. He will start his new role Dec.

24, following the planned departure of the current interim provost, **Beverly Warren**, EdD, PhD. In a related development, **Dr. Stephen Kates**, MD, a professor for a decade at Virginia Commonwealth University, will serve as the interim dean of the **VCU School of Medicine** and Interim Executive Vice President of Medical Affairs for **VCU Health**, effective Dec. 24. Dr. Kates is professor and Chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery in the School of Medicine. He serves as First Vice President of the American Orthopaedic Association and will become President in May 2026. He also is active in the Orthopedic Trauma Association. He previously served as chair of the VCU IRB Clinical Trials Panel, and he serves on the National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense study sections. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).