

# FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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## FEATURED CONTENT

### [VHHA in Action](#)

### [News Updates](#)

- [Congress Pursues Legislation to Continue Federal Government Funding Beyond Jan. 30](#)
- [CDC Data Shows Decline in Drug Overdose Deaths, Increase in Alcohol-Related ED Visits](#)
- [Virginia Among the States Taking Enforcement Action Against Fraudulent Nursing Licenses](#)
- [VDH Accepting Public Comments on Update to Regulations for Durable Do Not Resuscitate Orders](#)

### [Events](#)

- [Register for the 2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit in February](#)
- [DHS to Host Jan. 28-29 Webinars on Combatting Human Trafficking](#)

### [Podcast](#)

- [VHHA Patients Come First Podcast Features Virginia Health Catalyst Leader](#)

### [Around the State](#)

## 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:

### **Virginia Governor Touts Healthcare Plans on Drug Costs, Coverage Access, Workforce in GA Speech**

- This is the first full week of the **Virginia General Assembly** 2026 legislative regular session and there has already been plenty of action. Last weekend was the formal inauguration of **Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger**, **Virginia Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi**, and **Virginia Attorney General Jay Jones**, who were elected last November to serve four-year terms. On Monday, Governor Spanberger delivered an [address to a joint session of the General Assembly](#). The Governor's remarks focused on economic themes related to the high cost of living, including

some healthcare items. Speaking to the topic of prescription drug costs, the Governor highlighted a legislative proposal to steer drug rebates to consumers rather than pharmacy benefit managers. She also touted a plan to “establish targeted premium assistance” to help Virginians impacted by the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits that defray the cost of purchasing ACA marketplace health coverage, as well as efforts to “invest in our healthcare workforce.” In the opening days of her Administration, the Governor also issued 10 [executive orders](#), including one on [“Lowering the Cost of Healthcare”](#) that calls for the creation of an Interagency Health Financing Task Force “that maximizes opportunities to leverage federal funds and eliminates duplicative spending to strengthen Virginia’s long-term healthcare infrastructure programs, including behavioral health, workforce development, and data modernization.” The Task Force is directed to prepare and present a summary of findings to the Governor by May 1. This year’s session is scheduled for 60 days through March 16. During that period, lawmakers will consider several thousand bills and develop a new two-year state budget. VHHA will monitor, and engage on, the budget development process and legislation in support of hospitals and health systems. That includes policy related to the impact of the federal budget reconciliation package on healthcare funding, healthcare workforce development, insurance prior authorization reform, remote patient monitoring, site neutral payment policy, forensic nursing reimbursement, and much more. Throughout the session, the **VHHA Government Affairs Team** will work at the State Capitol advocating for the interests of hospitals, health systems, the healthcare delivery system, public health, and patients.

### **VHHA Report Shows Hospitals Provide \$4.5 Billion in Community Benefit, Have \$68.6 Billion**

- Virginia hospitals and health systems provided \$4.5 billion in community support to the Commonwealth in 2024 and generated \$68.8 billion in positive economic impact across the state, according to the newly released [2026 Annual Report on Community Benefit](#) from VHHA. Across Virginia, hospitals and health systems provide essential health services and medical treatment to patients and families in need 24/7/365. Their teams of doctors, nurses, technicians, caregivers, and support staff always answer the call by prioritizing patient well-being and focusing on sustaining and restoring quality of life through necessary medical interventions. Hospitals provide community support in many ways including \$1.2 billion in government payment shortfalls due to the difference between Medicare reimbursements and the actual cost of care. Hospitals provide \$457 million in charity care, which includes the cost of free and discounted care to serve individuals who cannot afford to pay for care. And acute care Virginia hospitals provided \$650 million to cover the state share of Medicaid expansion costs in 2024, which enabled hundreds of thousands of Virginians to gain health care coverage. In 2024, Virginia hospitals accommodated 4.45 million patient days, accepted more than 813,000 inpatient admissions, and handled 91.6 percent of all voluntary and involuntary behavioral health admissions. View VHHA’s interactive Community Benefit tool [here](#) and read the full report through this [link](#).

### **VDH, VHHA Share Recommendations on Accessing Care, Protecting Health During Flu Season**

- As communities across the nation and in Virginia experience increased levels of influenza and other respiratory illnesses, the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** and the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)** recently [urged the public to take steps to prevent illness and seek appropriate care](#), when needed. Annual flu seasons traditionally coincide with the fall and winter months. The 2025-26 influenza season has seen rising cases in December and early

January, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [estimating](#) at least 18 million illnesses, 230,000 hospitalizations, and 9,300 deaths from flu so far this season. In response, hospitals in Hampton Roads and Central Virginia – regions that have experienced elevated flu and respiratory virus rates – recently shared public guidance on masking in clinical settings and general health and safety precautions during this stretch of respiratory illness season. VDH also shared recommendations for healthcare facilities on “[Preventing Transmission of Respiratory Viruses in Healthcare Settings](#)” that encourage immunization for the flu, COVID-19, and RSV; respiratory hygiene practices related to mask usage and regular hand washing to limit the spread of illness; and other precautions. The state health department also has information for the public about [Respiratory Virus Prevention](#) and an interactive online [Respiratory Disease Data dashboard](#) that tracks respiratory illnesses across Virginia. Most people with flu have mild to moderate illness and can recover at home with rest, hydration, and over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers. If you get sick with flu symptoms, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. Common flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or congested nose, muscle aches, chills, fatigue, and, in some cases, vomiting or diarrhea. Emergency warning signs of flu sickness include trouble breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or seizure. Emergency [signs in children](#) may present differently. People experiencing mild to moderate symptoms that are not life-threatening can be safely evaluated and treated at a primary care provider or urgent care facility. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at higher risk of serious flu complications or are concerned about your illness, call a healthcare provider for advice. Accessing care in the appropriate care setting helps ensure timely treatment for all patients and reduces unnecessary strain on hospital emergency departments. A visit to an emergency room should be reserved only for true emergency situations, for example a person who is having trouble breathing due to an illness or other serious conditions. Read more [here](#).

#### **VHEMP Hosts National Weather Service Webinar on Winter Weather Outlook**

- This week, The **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP)** hosted a winter weather briefing webinar with the **National Weather Service (NWS)**. The briefing focused on the potential winter weather that is projected to impact Virginia in the coming days (Jan. 23-25). In anticipation of that storm, **Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger** issued a [State of Emergency declaration](#) this week. Webinar panelists shared considerations and recommendations related to transportation, infrastructure, supply chain, and personal safety. Information about motorist safety during winter weather is available from the **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)** [here](#). Visit this [link](#) to view a webinar recording and access webinar presentation slides [here](#).

#### **VHHA Hosts Meeting of Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup**

- This week, VHHA held a meeting of the **Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup**. The workgroup includes hospital safety and security leaders focused on sharing experiences, ideas, and best practices regarding current and future safety, security, violence prevention, and response activities in Virginia hospitals and health systems. The agenda for the recent meeting included an update on Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs, workplace violence data reporting, armed officer programs, managing medical temporary detention orders, and more. Contact **Abraham Segres** at [asegres@vhha.com](mailto:asegres@vhha.com) with questions about the group.

## VHHA Invites Hospital Staff, Partners, Stakeholders to Jan. 28 Centennial Celebration in Richmond

- This year, the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA)** is celebrating its centennial anniversary and 100 years of working alongside Virginia's hospitals, health systems, policymakers, and community leaders to advance healthcare across the Commonwealth. Throughout 2026, VHHA will honor and celebrate a century of impactful work during a series of events this year. This month, VHHA is hosting a celebration in Richmond to reflect on that legacy and look ahead to the future we're building together. The VHHA Centennial Celebration event is scheduled for Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. on the Carpenter Theatre Stage at the Dominion Energy Center in Richmond, VA. Please use this [link](#) to RSVP to attend the event. Questions may be sent to [centennial@vhha.com](mailto:centennial@vhha.com).

## 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 work is reflected in recent coverage from [Richmond Magazine](#), [Virginia Business](#), the [Farmville Herald](#), the [Richmond Free Press](#), [FFX Now](#), and [Loudoun Now](#).

# News Updates

## Congress Pursues Legislation to Continue Federal Government Funding Beyond Jan. 30

The **Committee on Appropriations** for the **U.S. House of Representatives** recently revealed the [text of a legislative package](#) to continue funding certain federal government operations beyond Jan. 30 when the current funding plan expires. That deadline was established last year when **Congress** and the **White House** reached a November deal on a continuing resolution to end a five-week government shutdown that began Oct. 1. Healthcare policy was a sticking point in deliberations during the shutdown, with some Democrats insisting on revisiting Medicaid policy and funding changes made in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act budget reconciliation package last year as well as action to extend expiring enhanced premium tax credits to help individuals purchase ACA marketplace insurance plans. Those policy questions were not directly addressed in the short-term funding measure approved to end the shutdown. If approved, the recent legislation would provide funding related to the **U.S. Departments of Defense Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Homeland Security**. Both the **U.S. House** and the **U.S. Senate** would need to approve the package to send it to the President to be signed into law.

## CDC Data Shows Decline in Drug Overdose Deaths, Increase in Alcohol-Related ED Visits

New [data estimates](#) released by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** indicate a 20.6 percent decline in drug overdose deaths in August 2025 compared to August 2024. The provisional data also shows an estimated 34 percent decline in Virginia. A [separate CDC data analysis](#) found that alcohol-related emergency department visits increased 101 percent for males and 96 percent for females from 2003-2004 to 2021-2022.

## Virginia Among the States Taking Enforcement Action Against Fraudulent Nursing Licenses

State nursing licensure bodies across the nation, including the **Virginia Board of Nursing**, are taking enforcement action against individuals with fraudulent nursing diplomas under an ongoing multi-state initiative known as [Operation Nightingale](#). That effort is targeting educational programs and individuals alleged to have sold fake nursing diplomas and transcripts. According to state officials, Virginia has already adjudicated approximately 150-200 cases related to that scheme with roughly 50 additional cases presently under investigation. Many of the Virginia-based individuals implicated in this situation have worked in long-term care settings as licensed practical nurses, with many of the cases concentrated in Northern Virginia. Virginia hospital officials seeking additional information can access [license verification services](#) through the **Virginia Department of Health Professions (DHP)**. The free [E-Notify](#) service from the **National Council of State Boards of Nursing** is also a relevant resource for hospitals.

### **VDH Accepting Public Comments on Update to Regulations for Durable Do Not Resuscitate Orders**

The **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** is accepting public comments through Jan. 28 on proposed changes to state regulations pertaining to Durable Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Orders. The regulatory action is being taken to ensure compliance with state law and conformity with the Virginia Administrative Code. The proposed changes are deemed non-controversial and are focused on updating the “clarity and consistency of the regulation” to “help ensure that health care personnel, emergency medical services providers, and residents of the Commonwealth can effectively access and understand the regulation governing DNRs.” Feb. 12 is the scheduled effective date of the updated regulations. Read more [here](#). Questions may be directed to **Mohamed G. Abbamin**, MPA, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Emergency Services, Virginia Department of Health, at (804) 980-6984, or [mohamed.abbamin@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:mohamed.abbamin@vdh.virginia.gov).

## **Events**

### **Register for the 2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit in February**

Registration is open for the **2026 Virginia Patient Safety Summit**, which will be held as a free 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 healthcare 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 in health systems, accountability and transparency, and patient and family engagement. Register through this [link](#). The **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** is hosting this event in partnership with the **Virginia Nurses Association** and the **Virginia Nurses Foundation**, the **Medical Society of Virginia**, the **Virginia Pharmacists Association**, and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists**.

### **DHS to Host Jan. 28-29 Webinars on Combatting Human Trafficking**

During National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** is hosting a pair of free webinars offering tips on how to recognize and report potential human

trafficking cases. The “From Awareness to Action: Recognizing and Reporting Human Trafficking” webinars are scheduled for Jan. 28 at 2:30 p.m. EST (English language presentation) and Jan. 29 at 2:30 p.m. EST (Spanish language presentation). Register for the English language webinar [here](#) and for the Spanish language presentation through this [link](#).

## Podcast

### VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Virginia Health Catalyst Leader

This episode of VHHA’s *Patients Come First* podcast features **Virginia Health Catalyst** Executive Director **Victor McKenzie Jr.** for a conversation about his professional journey and the organization’s policy priorities during the **Virginia General Assembly** 2026 legislative session and beyond. 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](#), [Tuneln](#), [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 named Chief Operating Officer of **VCU Medical Center**. After serving on an interim basis since September, she became the permanent COO in early January. Roane has been a registered nurse for 32 years with expertise 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** before taking on the interim COO role. From 2020 through 2022, Roane served as the interim chief nursing officer for VCU Medical Center. Her leadership has been recognized locally and regionally. She is the 2024 recipient of the Paul A. and Veronica H. Gross Achievement Award, recognizing the substantial contributions she has made to nursing. In 2021, Roane was recognized as the YWCA’s Outstanding Woman in Health and Science for the Richmond Region. Read more [here](#).

**Ballad Health's Johnson City Medical Center** has selected **Adnan Brka**, RN, MS, to serve as Chief Nursing Officer. In that role, Brka will oversee all nursing practices at the hospital. He will begin his role Jan. 26. Brka brings extensive nursing leadership experience with Ballad Health. Most recently, he served as chief nursing officer for **Holston Valley Medical Center** and **Indian Path Community Hospital**, where he led nursing operations, quality and safety efforts, and workforce initiatives. Prior to that role, he served as interim chief nursing officer and as critical care director, overseeing the intensive care unit, progressive care unit, and COVID-19 units. Brka earned his licensed practical nurse degree from the Tennessee Technology Center in Elizabethton in 2005. He earned his associate degree in 2010, his bachelor of science degree in nursing from King University in 2011, and his master of science degree from Western Governors University in 2020. Read more [here](#).

