



Thursday, May 26, 2011

Medicaid EHR Incentive Payment Program For Hospitals Announced

Connecticut has established the Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Payment Program for hospitals, enabling Connecticut hospitals utilizing certified EHR technology to be eligible for \$49 million in Medicaid EHR payments.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment/HITECH Act of 2009 created the opportunity for states to develop Medicaid EHR incentive programs. Last July, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid issued the final rule regarding both the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs and the "meaningful use" of health information technology. The rule defined hospital eligibility for Medicaid incentive payments to be hospitals that have at least a 10 percent Medicaid patient volume for each year for which the hospital seeks an EHR incentive payment.

States had some discretion in defining Medicaid patient volume and CHA advocated for the broadest definition to allow all Connecticut hospitals to qualify for the incentive payments. In a [letter](#) filed with the Department of Social Services (DSS) last July, CHA detailed its position on the definition of Medicaid encounters, the time period for measuring the volume, and the source of the data. The DSS program incorporates the following CHA-recommended elements: the program will begin in 2011, payments will be made over three years, a larger portion will be paid in the earlier years, ED volume is included in the measurement of Medicaid patient encounters, and SAGA volume is also included in the measurement of Medicaid patient encounters (in the pre-MLIA measurement period).

Click [here](#) for the DSS website set up to assist hospitals.

For more information about the incentive payment program, please contact Stephen Frayne, CHA's Senior Vice President, Health Policy, frayne@chime.org.

Implementer Bill Includes Hospital Tax; Details of Tax Still Not Decided

On Tuesday, May 24, the Senate met and passed on a vote of 19-15 [SB 1240](#), *An Act Concerning The Bureau Of Rehabilitative Services And Implementation Of Provisions Of The Budget Concerning Human Services And Public Health*. This bill implements the Governor's budget as it relates to Human Services and Public Health programs, including the imposition of the hospital provider tax. Democratic Senators Gayle Slossberg (D-Milford) and Joan Hartley (D-Waterbury) joined every Republican voting in opposition to the bill. The bill was immediately transmitted to the House of Representatives for action, where it was debated and passed today on a mostly party-line vote of 87-55.

During the Senate and House debates, the question of the impact on individual hospitals was raised and Appropriations Committee Co-Chairs, Senator Toni Harp (D-New Haven) and Representative Toni Walker (D-New Haven), noted that the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is currently in discussion with CHA regarding CHA's proposal.

Among other provisions that are already in the budget and not new issues, SB 1240 would specifically:

- Merge several agencies for the disabled and a rehabilitation program for injured workers into a new social services bureau;
- Freeze general Medicaid rates for nursing homes and care facilities for the developmentally disabled, suspend cost-of-living adjustments to welfare grants, and reduce payments to pharmacies serving medical assistance patients;
- Add coverage of smoking cessation and additional podiatry services to the Medicaid program;

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- Limit Medicaid coverage for non-emergency dental care for healthy adults to one dental exam, cleaning, and set of bitewing x-rays per year;
- Under Medicaid provide one pair of eyeglasses every two years, instead of one pair per year;
- Repeal a law passed last year that allowed people whose spouses receive Medicaid coverage for nursing home care to keep more assets;
- Reduce the amount of money people receiving Medicaid coverage in long-term care facilities can keep from monthly income from \$69 to \$60; and
- Allow the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner to create an alternative benefit package for people covered in the Medicaid Low Income Adults (MLIA) program. The commissioner could limit services in several categories, including office visits with healthcare providers, hospital visits, medical equipment, pharmacy services, non-emergency medical transportation, and home care services.

On Wednesday, May 25, the Senate debated and voted to approve, on a [vote](#) of 18-17, [SB 913](#), *An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave To Employees*, a union-backed bill strongly opposed by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and the general business community. The bill would mandate that companies with 50 employees or more offer paid sick days to their workers. The bill was substantially amended to exempt nationally-chartered non-profit organizations, manufacturing firms, and other businesses whose employees do not deal directly with the public. Senator Michael McLachlan (R-Danbury) offered an amendment to exempt all 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations as classified by the IRS from the provisions of the bill. The amendment was defeated on a vote of 12-22. The bill, as amended, would be applicable mainly to service industry employees, including food service and certain direct healthcare workers. The bill was transmitted to the House for further action. Governor Malloy has pledged to sign the bill into law should it reach his desk.

The other implementer bill passed by the time of publication of *Update* was [HB 6650](#), *An Act Implementing The Provisions Of The Budget Concerning The Judicial Branch, Child Protection, Criminal Justice, Weigh Stations And Certain State Agency Consolidations*, which was passed by the House and is awaiting action by the Senate.

Malloy Administration Presents Bioscience Connecticut Proposal at Informational Hearing

On Thursday morning, members of the Malloy administration and representatives from the University of Connecticut discussed the Governor's Bioscience Connecticut proposal at a joint informational hearing of the General Assembly's Higher Education, Finance, Appropriations, Commerce, and Public Health Committees.

The initiative, proposed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy last week, is designed to help put people to work now and sustain economic growth and innovation going forward by making Connecticut a leader in the bioscience industry, according to the Governor.

CHA Annual Meeting To Include Supplier Diversity Vendor Fair, June 23



CHA is hosting the second annual Supplier Diversity Vendor Fair prior to the CHA Annual Meeting on June 23. Through its initiative to address racial and ethnic disparities in hospitals, CHA is focusing on moving toward board and management representation that reflects hospitals' communities and patients, enhancing the economic infrastructures in communities, including minority-owned businesses, and addressing health disparities by helping to ensure that all patients receive the most appropriate care, in the most appropriate setting at the right time.

Expanding supplier diversity within hospitals is a key element of the initiative and CHA has been working with member hospitals to identify qualified minority-owned vendors to supply goods and services to hospitals. The vendor fair, which will be open from 1:00-4:00 p.m., will feature businesses in several areas including advertising, architectural services, collections, construction, IT implementation, janitorial services and supplies, medical supplies, office equipment, and relocation and staffing services.

Education sessions focused on supplier diversity begin at 10:30 a.m., immediately prior to the vendor fair. Speakers at the program will be Pam Scagliarini, System Director, Supply Chain Management, Yale New Haven Health System; Fred McKinney, PhD, President of the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council; and Jennifer Cox, attorney, Cox & Osowiecki.

For more information on the education session or the vendor fair, contact Peggy Courchesne at courchesne@chime.org.

Helping Hospitals in the Midwest and South

The severe weather cutting a path of destruction across the Midwest and the floodwaters of the Mississippi River have not spared hospitals. One way to assist hospital employees in all affected areas, including Joplin, Missouri, is through [The Care Fund](#), which has been established to provide assistance to hospital employees who so desperately need our help. All the funds raised through this effort will be distributed by hospitals in the affected areas to their employees who need it most.

The Care Fund was established by the Alabama Hospital Association in 2005, to help with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. (Photo: Promise Healthcare facility in Vidalia, LA.)



Education Updates

***Leaping from Staff to Management: You're a Manager. Now What?*, Thursday, June 9, 8:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.**

Making the transition from being a staff person one day to a supervisor/manager the next is a significant step for nearly everyone. Taking on a leadership role is far more challenging and complicated than ever before. Once you have met the challenge of simply getting oriented to what it means to be a manager/leader, you will discover that you carry the responsibility for meeting the demands of your organization for high productivity, combined with financial prudence and regulatory compliance. You will discover that those tasks must be balanced with an excellent grasp of human relations skills in working closely and collaboratively with others. This program has been designed to get you started by exploring the basics of management and leadership in theory and applied practice, and to lay the groundwork for continued development of your leadership and management skills.

The program's speaker, Victor Walton, MA, is a professional educator, speaker, trainer, and leadership consultant to organizations throughout the United States. He has a deep personal involvement and interest in the professional, personal growth, and development of people in changing organizations. Participants who have attended this program in the past routinely rate Vic as an outstanding speaker who offers practical approaches to effective leadership.

Click [here](#) for the brochure, and [here](#) to register.

Connecticut Hospital Association is an Approved Provider of Continuing Nursing Education by the Connecticut Nurses' Association, an Accredited Approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (6.25 contact hours). This program has been approved for Continuing Education Credit Hours by the National Association of Social Workers, CT and meets the continuing education criteria for CT Social Work Licensure renewal (6.25 credit hours). This program has met the HR Certification Institute's criteria to be pre-approved for recertification credit (6.25 credit hours).

HIPAA Privacy and Records Release, Friday, June 10, 9:00 a.m. – noon

Protection of medical information in all forms has always been an important responsibility for healthcare providers. Given the financial, legal, and reputational risks associated with using sophisticated technology to process personal health information—along with increased governmental scrutiny of how the transition from paper to electronic health record is being handled, it is imperative that hospital staff in all areas, at all levels understand federal and state laws and regulations related to medical information.

This half-day program is designed as a refresher course on the HIPAA Privacy rule, and will cover the Connecticut framework for record release and disclosure requirements; media requests, social media, and advertising privacy issues; handling highly sensitive data (e.g., HIV, mental health, substance abuse treatment data); law enforcement requests; and distinctions based on setting (clinic, physician practice, skilled nursing, etc.)

Participants will learn what the law requires, and practical steps that should be taken to improve privacy and security policies and procedures in their organizations.

The session will be presented by Jennifer Cox of Cox & Osowiecki, LLC, a Hartford law firm representing healthcare institutions and providers in regulatory, litigation, licensing, and business matters.

Click [here](#) for the brochure, and click [here](#) to register.

Advanced Concepts for Experienced Nurse Preceptors, Monday, June 27, 9:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Experienced nurse preceptors play a vital role in the development of professional nurses at their organizations. While the rewards of teaching students and new nurses are great, the demands and challenges are many. Supporting these veteran staff registered nurses to grow and learn in their own right is an important part of sustaining their good work.

Advanced Concepts for Experienced Nurse Preceptors is a full-day program conceived by the same team of educators from Connecticut hospitals and schools of nursing that developed the highly successful basic nurse preceptorship program. It is designed to help experienced nurse preceptors renew knowledge of basic concepts, learn about and discuss specific preceptor practices and professional nursing trends, and participate in interactive sessions with their counterparts from around the state on topics that present challenges to them.

Following a brief overview of basic precepting concepts, this program will feature sessions on strategies for developing critical thinking in the preceptee, motivating and influencing, staying current as a professional, and “challenge scenario” discussion and analysis. The program will provide a unique opportunity for nurses who have precepted for a few years to learn and strengthen their skills and to share experiences with colleagues from a variety of organizations.

The program is presented by Robin Guisti, EdD, MSN, RN-BC, Administrative Director of Nursing Services, The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital; Anna McGuirk, MSN, RN, Clinical Educator and Consultant; and Justin Sleeper, MSN, RN, Director of Education, The William W. Backus Hospital.

Click [here](#) for the brochure, and [here](#) to register.

Connecticut Hospital Association is an Approved Provider of Continuing Nursing Education by the Connecticut Nurses' Association, an Accredited Approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (5.5 contact hours).