December Medicaid Holdbacks Don’t Include Additional Cuts to Hospitals

On December 30, 2015, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) released a list of $93 million in projected savings or budget cuts that will be ordered by the Malloy Administration as part of the Deficit Mitigation Plan adopted by the Legislature in December. The list contains an additional reduction of $24.6 million in the Medicaid line of the budget. Although the Department of Social Services (DSS) is implementing the $90 million reduction to hospitals adopted during the December Special Session, the $24.6 million reduction does not represent an additional cut to hospitals. Instead, the additional reduction is a projection of a lapse, which means it is money that is not expected to be spent in other areas of Medicaid.

Click here to view the list of the reductions. While the list totals only $82.1 million in reductions or savings, OPM said the balance will be achieved through savings that various state departments and agencies are “already on pace to achieve.”

State Tax Panel Endorses PILOT Scheme for Hospitals

In its final report, the Connecticut State Tax Panel recommended that lawmakers continue to exempt not-for-profit hospitals from paying local property taxes. The panel of tax experts endorsed Connecticut’s existing practice of making payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) grants to municipalities for not-for-profit hospitals, private colleges and universities, and state property. This recommendation was one of several impacting Connecticut’s tax code that are included in a condensed final report released on December 31, 2015.

While the panel effectively endorsed the current property tax exemption for not-for-profit hospitals, it did not offer recommendations on how to fund the existing PILOT program. The panel also noted that, under existing law, municipalities may develop voluntary PILOT programs with the owners of tax-exempt properties to help finance the delivery of local public services. Several of these arrangements already exist in Connecticut.

The panel of attorneys, accountants, and municipal officials held a series of hearings and meetings addressing concerns regarding the state’s tax policies. Their recommendations are intended to modernize tax policy, structure, and administration. The complete final report will be issued on February 28, 2016.

Connecticut Asthma Initiative Kickoff Program January 14

On Thursday, January 14, 2016, the Connecticut Asthma Initiative will hold a kickoff program at CHA. After ChimeData and national data determined that asthma remains a problem in Connecticut, affecting the quality of life of children and adults, the Connecticut Hospital Association’s Committee on Population Health developed the Connecticut Asthma Initiative to address the problem.

The vision of the initiative is to eliminate mortality due to asthma and ensure that no one in Connecticut unnecessarily limits his or her life because of asthma. Its goals are to improve access and appropriate care by partnering with the community, reduce asthma hospitalizations and ED visits, and significantly advance progress toward health equity for asthma care and outcomes by 2017.

During 2015, the Connecticut Asthma Initiative was awarded a grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation to support the health equity focus of the initiative. Over several months, CHA convened hospital Emergency Department clinicians, pulmonary/asthma experts, and quality improvement leaders, as well as representatives from the Department of Public Health and the Department of Social Services, to identify and prioritize best-practice interventions and measures.

The initiative is led by Anne Diamond, CEO, UConn Health John Dempsey Hospital, and Stuart G. Marcus, MD, CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center. Members comprise nearly 100 people from 60 organizations including hospitals, community organizations, state government, and more.

Johnson Memorial Hospital Joins Trinity Health - New England

Johnson Memorial Hospital and Trinity Health - New England announced on January 1, 2016 the signing of final agreement documents that officially transfer Johnson Memorial’s assets to Trinity Health - New England. Johnson is the fourth hospital to join Trinity Health - New England, the new regional health ministry that also includes Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, as well as Sisters of Providence Health System and its affiliate, Mercy Medical Center, in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Last month, the Office of Health Care Access approved the acquisition of assets of Johnson Memorial Hospital by Trinity Health - New
Raul Pino Appointed Acting DPH Commissioner

Raul Pino, MD, MPH, until recently the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH), has been appointed to lead the agency until a permanent successor for former Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA, is hired.

Dr. Pino was appointed Acting Commissioner by Governor Malloy at the end of 2015. The Governor’s office is expected to find a replacement for Dr. Mullen early this year.

Before being appointed Deputy Commissioner at DPH, Dr. Pino served as the Health and Human Services Director for the city of Hartford. Prior to that, Dr. Pino was an epidemiologist for DPH and worked at the Institute for Community Research, the Hispanic Health Council, and Hartford Hospital.

He is a member of the American Public Health Association and National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse. He earned his medical degree at the University of Havana, and holds a Master’s in Public Health from the UConn School of Medicine.

Dr. Mullen, who announced her resignation in November, is now working for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, which is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Education Updates

OSHA Recordkeeping Seminar
Monday, January 11, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

Is your OSHA LOG accurate? Should you record the following injuries on your 2015 Log: Medical Glue is applied to close multiple lacerations? X-rays are taken of a leg after a fall, but the results are negative? Employee is given a non-prescription pain medication at prescription strength? The injury occurred in December 2014, but the employee didn’t return to full duty until March 2015?

To learn more about the most recent changes and updates, please join Leona May, Compliance Assistance Specialist with Federal OSHA in Bridgeport, for a detailed overview of OSHA Recordkeeping. Bring your log and your questions!

Patient Family Engagement Conference: Communicating Clearly Across the Continuum
Wednesday, January 20, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

Our next Patient Family Engagement Conference will focus on access to information. The morning portion of the program will highlight patient portals, portable medical records, and the current laws and regulations that govern patient access to information. The afternoon will focus on Patient Engagement with the Choosing Wisely collaborative. The session will provide an overview of the Choosing Wisely® campaign, an initiative of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation, in partnership with Consumer Reports, to help providers and patients work together to reduce the overuse of tests and procedures, and support patients in their efforts to make smart and effective care choices. The presenters, including a panel of local experts, will showcase campaign resources and tools and provide examples of how Choosing Wisely® is being implemented in workplace, community, and healthcare settings in Connecticut.

The program is being presented as part of the Partnership for Patients HEN 2.0 educational series.

2016 Joint Commission Standards and National Patient Safety Goals Update
Thursday, January 21, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

National expert Diana Scott, Sr. Director, Vizient, will join us to present CHA's annual full-day program outlining The Joint Commission’s
new standards and national patient safety goals for 2016, as well as challenges from 2015 with strategies for compliance. Ms. Scott will also review survey process changes, patient safety alerts and tips, and CMS focus areas, as well as best practices for a successful survey.

CHA is also pleased to have Mark Crafton, Executive Director of Communications and External Relations at The Joint Commission (TJC), and Ann Scott Blouin, Executive Vice President of Customer Relations at TJC, join us for the program. Their presentations will cover the CMS-required survey process changes, significant developments in hospital options for the submission of core measure data to TJC, compliance data on challenging accreditation standards in Connecticut hospitals, and several of TJC's newer programs and services—including TJC's Center on High Reliability.

Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m.

Surgical Site Infections
Thursday, January 28, 2016
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Event Registration

CHA is partnering with the Connecticut Surgical Quality Collaborative to host a conference dedicated to learning how to reduce surgical site infections. The program starts with a patient who will discuss the repercussions of a surgical site infection. Keynote speaker Patch Dellinger, MD, a national leader in the science of surgical infection reduction, will be transferring that knowledge to help hospitals avoid infections after difficult surgeries that are at risk for infection. Dr. Dellinger will also utilize a case study that takes a patient from booking through surgery, with the intent of minimizing surgical site infections. In addition, participants will hear from the surgical teams at Yale-New Haven Hospital and Stamford Hospital, which have successfully reduced their infection frequencies.

The program is being presented as part of the Partnership for Patients HEN 2.0 educational series.