Municipalities Take Action on Tobacco Ordinances

On January 21, 2019, the Bridgeport City Council became the second municipality in Connecticut to approve a city-wide ordinance raising the legal age from 18-21 to purchase tobacco and vaping products. The vote to approve the ordinance passed the Council on a vote of 16-1. Bridgeport Hospital, St. Vincent’s Medical Center, and Trinity Health Of New England joined CHA in advocacy activities in support of the ordinance. Mayor Joe Ganim expressed support for the ordinance and is expected to sign the measure in the coming days. Approval comes three months after the Hartford City Council approved a similar ordinance. Other municipalities are also in various stages of proposing and debating raising the age to purchase tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21. In addition, several legislative proposals have been introduced in the General Assembly for the 2019 Legislative Session, and CHA continues to advocate for stricter tobacco control measures.

Bridgeport’s ordinance, which includes the purchase of electronic cigarettes, follows recent reports of a spike in the number of high school students using the devices. Just last fall, the Connecticut Department of Public Health reported that 14.7 percent of high school students used electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), compared to 7.2 percent in 2015. The survey found 1 in 10 ninth graders and more than 1 in 5 twelfth graders currently use ENDS.

Also on Tuesday, the South Windsor Town Council held a public hearing on a proposed ordinance that would also raise the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21. CHA and Trinity Health Of New England previously submitted testimony in support of the measure. It is expected that the Town Council will vote on the ordinance in the coming weeks.

Gaylord Specialty Healthcare Announces Sonja LaBarbera as President and CEO

Sonja LaBarbera has been appointed Chief Executive Officer and President of Gaylord Specialty Healthcare. Ms. LaBarbera succeeded prior CEO, George Kyriacou.

Ms. LaBarbera arrived at Gaylord Specialty Healthcare 14 years ago in the position of Director of Inpatient Therapy and ascended the ranks to become Chief Operating Officer. It was in this position that she played a vital role in increasing system-wide volumes and patient satisfaction scores, and more than tripled the size and scope of Gaylord’s outpatient Physical Therapy, Orthopedics, and Sports Medicine programs.

Mr. Kyriacou, who retired as CEO at the end of 2018, and who continues to serve as Chief Strategy Officer, attributes much of Gaylord’s success over the last decade to Ms. LaBarbera’s dynamic personality. “Not only is she full of energy, but she’s bursting with ideas and has the rare ability to make things happen quickly and effectively.”

He explained that Ms. LaBarbera is a leader for the future, a trait he called “increasingly important and rare in a healthcare system that’s in constant flux.”

Robert Lyons, Chairman of Gaylord’s Board of Directors, said, “It’s imperative to identify leaders who can position our organization for the future and do it in a positive, cost-effective way that meets patients’ needs and delivers integrated care. Ms. LaBarbera epitomizes someone who can take Gaylord from where it is today to where it needs to be tomorrow.”

Ms. LaBarbera’s peers say that she is committed to patient-centric care and is often overheard saying, “It is always about the patient.” More than her trademark motto, her staff explain that it is a litmus test for every decision she makes.

“I am very excited to start this new chapter of my career at Gaylord,” Ms. LaBarbera recently wrote in a letter addressing employees. “What Gaylord offers is truly unique. Our outcomes are among the best in the country, which is a reflection of our commitment. As a team, we are making tremendous progress toward growing our reputation as a provider of choice for rehabilitation and complex medical management. The forward momentum is exciting!”

Flu Activity Increasing Across the State

Influenza cases continue to increase across the nation and here in Connecticut. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is reporting that flu cases are now widespread across the state. The predominant influenza viruses identified so far this season are Type A, although there is a small percentage of Type B influenza viruses in circulation.

Statewide Emergency Department visits attributed to the “fever/flu syndrome” are at 10.1 percent, which is well above the level of five percent statewide -- generally considered the minimum threshold when there are elevated influenza-associated ED visits. There have been 8 flu-associated deaths and 433 hospitalizations due to the flu so far this season.

Vaccination is a best practice for patient and healthcare worker safety. In 2011, the CHA Board adopted a statewide policy endorsing mandatory influenza vaccination for hospital personnel as part of CHA hospitals’ commitment to patient safety. The vast majority of acute care CHA member hospitals in Connecticut have implemented a mandatory participation or mandatory vaccination program.
CHA is participating in the fifth-annual United Against the Flu campaign, which uses social media outreach to bring national attention to the need for flu vaccinations. The American Hospital Association is partnering with national healthcare, patient advocacy, and other like-minded organizations for a four-month campaign encouraging the public to get an influenza vaccination.

CHA To Hold Joint Commission Standards and National Patient Safety Goals Update

CHA’s annual The Joint Commission Standards and National Patient Safety Goals Update will be held on Wednesday, January 30, 2019. Event Registration

The full-day program will feature national safety expert Diana Scott, Senior Accreditation Director at Vizient, who will outline The Joint Commission’s new standards and national patient safety goals for 2019, and challenges from 2018 with strategies for compliance. Ms. Scott will also review CMS focus areas, as well as best practices for a successful survey.

Mark Crafton, Executive Director of State and External Relations, The Joint Commission, will also join the program. His presentation will include an overview of the changes implemented by the Commission.

Attendees will also receive information on compliance data and on challenging accreditation standards in Connecticut hospitals.

Education Updates

Lean Principles: Project Charter Preparation and Planning
Tuesday, February 5, 2019
9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

Lean principles and methodology are valuable in improving healthcare, but evidence shows that learning about the principles and methodology is simply not enough. To get the desired results, the principles must be applied. This program—a follow-up to CHA’s two-part Lean Principles: Process Flow and Value Stream Mapping in Healthcare—provides an overview of the methodology and tools needed for planning process improvement initiatives.

This is a “how to make it happen session,” and will explain (and provide examples of) the elements of an effective project charter, a pre-requisite to any successful improvement initiative. When properly prepared, the charter focuses the team on the business case, problems, objectives, and outcomes, and is a major factor in preventing project scope creep.

Participants are asked to bring with them a process improvement opportunity currently under consideration at their facility, enabling them to create a draft charter as part of their actionable plan toward their process improvement initiative.

Clinical leaders, operational managers, continuous improvement coordinators, and other change agents will benefit from learning this methodology to plan team-oriented improvement initiatives.

HIIN: It Takes a Village: Improving Sepsis Care in Connecticut
Monday, February 25, 2019
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Event Registration

CHA will host a full-day conference dedicated to the urgent need to improve sepsis care across the continuum of care in Connecticut. The conference will open with Ciaran Staunton, who, along with his wife Orlaith, founded The Rory Staunton Foundation in 2012 after the tragic death of his 12-year-old son from sepsis. The Rory Staunton Foundation has impacted sepsis care both nationally and internationally. Hear the Staunton’s compelling story and message regarding the importance of raising public awareness of sepsis through education and awareness programs to promote faster diagnosis and effective treatment of sepsis.

Keynote speaker Mitchell Levy, MD, is one of the founding members and an executive leader of the Surviving Sepsis campaign, a global initiative to improve the care of patients with severe sepsis. Dr. Levy is known internationally for his research and commitment to improving sepsis care. He will share his expertise and the latest recommendations on the care of patients with sepsis.

The program will also feature local and national speakers who will share their best practice recommendations for sepsis care across the continuum.

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