General Assembly Convenes for the 2012 Legislative Session
Governor Releases FY 2013 Budget Adjustments

As required by the state constitution, Connecticut state legislators met yesterday to officially kick off the 2012 Regular Session. As part of the start-of-session activities, Governor Dannel P. Malloy presented his annual State of the State Address to a Joint Session of the General Assembly.

The Governor challenged legislators to think boldly. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is time for us to lead again. Let's think big. Let's be bold," Malloy said. "Today, I am challenging the people in this chamber, and business leaders across the state, to join me in committing to build nothing less than a full-scale economic revival. Not a recovery, a revival."

He stressed that his budget and policy initiatives will focus on jobs, ensure budgetary and fiscal discipline, and reform education. The most significant changes to the FY 2013 budget are in the area of education and education reform.

The budget contains several provisions of interest to the hospital and healthcare communities. As proposed, the FY 2013 midterm budget adjustment:

- Does not include any reduction to hospital Medicaid rates.
- Does not include any changes to the hospital tax scheme.
- Reduces Medicaid Low-Income Adult enrollment.
  - The budget adjustment includes a proposal to seek a waiver in the Medicaid Low-Income Adult program to:
    - establish a $25,000 asset limit (excluding an automobile or home); count family income when determining eligibility for individuals under the age of 26 and either living with their parents or claimed as a dependent for tax purposes; and impose limits on certain medical services (the details of which are not yet available). This waiver will save the Department of Social Services and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) $22.5 million.
- Reduces funding in DMHAS for uncompensated care in hospitals and FQHCs, for a reduction of $2.9 million.
- Reduces community health center grants due to increased Medicaid payments for FQHCs, for a savings of $666,822.
- Revises rates and expands options for Medication Administration in the Money Follows the Person Demonstration, for a savings of $20 million.
- Reduces reimbursement rates for composite resin restorations and dentures, for a savings of $8.2 million.
- Restructures dental benefits by moving toward a client-centered benefit (coordinated) model, for a savings of $1.7 million.
- Reverts rates for air ambulances to rates in place in FY 2011, for a savings of $600,000.
- Provides a 1% cost-of-living increase for private providers effective January 1, 2013, at a cost of $8.5 million.
- Implements initiatives to “right-size” long-term care.

Governor Malloy’s budget includes: preK-12 education reform; increased contributions to the state employee pension system; updating the wholesale and retail sales of alcoholic beverages; two-storm response proposals; elimination of 25 of the state’s 258 boards and commissions; and increased spending to bolster affordable and supportive housing across the state. It also includes agency consolidations, including the consolidation of UConn Health Center and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner with UConn, the consolidation of the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority and the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority, and the consolidation of the Psychiatric Security Review Board with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

The budget will now be referred to the General Assembly’s Appropriations Committee for review and action. The Appropriations Committee will hold a series of public hearings over the next two weeks.
CHA Member Briefing on Mandatory Flu Vaccination Policy Draws Capacity Crowd

On Tuesday, nearly 150 attendees representing 29 acute care hospitals attended a CHA member briefing about its Statewide Mandatory Influenza Vaccination Policy.

The meeting featured a multidisciplinary group of presenters from the five Connecticut hospitals who have made flu vaccinations mandatory: St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Hospital of Saint Raphael, Griffin Hospital, Middlesex Hospital, and Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. The hospitals shared their experiences and reiterated their commitment to improving patient safety through requiring all employees regardless of position to be vaccinated, unless a valid medical reason contraindicating vaccination exists.

“If we believe in creating a culture of safety for our patients, this is the right thing to do,” said Susan Davis, EdD, President and Chief Executive Officer of St. Vincent’s Medical Center.

Presenters showcased the need for a mandatory flu vaccination policy, provided specific practical examples of how to approach various elements of implementation, and offered innovative strategies for achieving compliance. They encouraged other hospitals to enact similar policies, for which they agreed that when properly planned, are a valuable opportunity to improve patient safety.

The CHA Board of Trustees adopted a Statewide Mandatory Influenza Vaccination Policy in concert with key national organizations, aligning with Connecticut hospitals’ commitment to patient safety.

Speakers included: (Pictured) Susan Davis, EdD, President and CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center; Chris O’Connor, President and CEO, Hospital of Saint Raphael; Ken Schwartz, MD, Medical Director, Griffin Hospital; Arthur McDowell III, MD, Vice President, Clinical Affairs, Middlesex Hospital; (Not pictured) Douglas Waite, MD, VP, Medical Affairs and Quality, Day Kimball Healthcare and President, Connecticut Infectious Disease Society; Elizabeth Conrad, Vice President, Human Resources, and Mary Kuncas, Vice President of Patient Services, Hospital of Saint Raphael; Joanne Velardi, Director, Occupational Health, Wellness, and Rehabilitation Services, St. Vincent’s Medical Center; Bob Fraleigh, Director of Corporate Communications, and Susan MacArthur, Director of Infection Prevention, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center.

Backus and Hartford HealthCare to Explore Affiliation

On February 3, 2012, Backus Corporation and Hartford HealthCare announced that they are exploring a formal affiliation of the two healthcare systems. The two organizations entered into a non-binding Letter of Intent, beginning a process that is expected to take several months. If successful, Backus would become a member of the Hartford HealthCare network.

“Backus and Hartford HealthCare have enjoyed a long and beneficial partnership for many years. There is no better example of this than the LIFE STAR program,” said Backus President and Chief Executive Officer David Whitehead. “I am proud to be associated with such a forward-thinking Board that has chosen to explore this strategic partnership to create a sustainable system of integrated, high-value healthcare for the regional community of eastern Connecticut.”
An affiliation would enable both organizations to share the knowledge and expertise of their staffs and physicians, and give patients easier access to a wider range of services and treatments.

“We believe Backus would be a truly exceptional partner,” said Hartford HealthCare President and Chief Executive Officer Elliot Joseph. “It is a highly successful organization with an excellent medical staff, a strong management team, dedicated employees, and a firm commitment to providing high-quality care to the communities it serves. Like the current members of Hartford HealthCare, Backus shares a century-old heritage of community-based care. They share our mission and vision. Coming together, we strengthen our ability to serve the communities of Eastern Connecticut for the next 100 years and beyond.”

Backus Board Chairman Peter V. Disch said the goal of the process is to position Backus to meet the healthcare needs of the community, in the midst of a rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

“Our community needs a system of patient care to meet this region’s healthcare needs for years to come,” Mr. Disch said. “The Board has studied this issue, and we believe a partnership with Hartford HealthCare could create a model to meet those changing needs, right here in eastern Connecticut.”

The signing of a Letter of Intent is the first of several steps before an affiliation can be created. Both organizations will perform due diligence to determine if an affiliation would be in the best interest of patients and communities served by the institutions. If there is agreement to move forward, a Memorandum of Understanding followed by a Definitive Agreement would be created. This final step would require the approval of their respective governing Boards, and regulatory approval by appropriate state and federal agencies.

CHA’s 2012 Smart Moves Forum on Safe Patient Handling to be held February 28

Nurses, administrators, occupational health professionals, physical therapists, nursing assistants, and many others will convene on February 28, 2012, for CHA’s 6th annual Smart Moves Forum on Safe Patient Handling. They will hear from national speakers about how to keep patients and employees safe by using technology and best practices. The forum will feature a keynote address by Esther Murray, RN, MSN, COHNs, CSPHP. Ms. Murray, assistant director of Prism Medical Clinical Services, provides support for healthcare clients across the continuum of care. For nearly a decade, she has assisted hospitals and nursing homes in implementing and sustaining highly successful Safe Patient Handling (SPH) programs.

Smart Moves: Connecticut’s Campaign for Safe Patient Handling is a statewide initiative on safe patient handling that aims to improve the health and safety of nurses and other healthcare workers, increase patient safety, and reduce healthcare costs. The campaign focuses on increasing awareness and education regarding safe patient handling; promoting the use of evidence-based curricula; encouraging implementation of safe patient handling programs; and increasing the use of assistive equipment and patient-handling devices.

The program is presented through collaboration among CHA, the Connecticut Nurses’ Association, LeadingAge Connecticut, the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities, and the Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice.

Connecticut Hospital Association-CHA 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 (3.25 contact hours). This program has been approved by the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Health Care Administrators for 3.25 CEUs for Nursing Home Administrators.

The Smart Moves Forum is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. on February 28, 2012. For more information, click here. To register, click here.

Education Updates

Webinar: Assessing Your Vendors for ICD-10 Readiness
February 15, 2012, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

With a project as big as the ICD-10 transition, virtually no provider is undertaking the transition without an external partner. And no transition plan is complete without a thorough assessment of the ICD-10 readiness of your current vendors and payers. Choosing the right partner or having an existing partner who may not be ready in time can mean the difference between success and failure. Knowing how to leverage your partnerships will be invaluable to the success of your transition plan. This session, the final in a four-part series, will focus on asking the right questions and knowing the right facts about your current vendors, and in selecting any new vendors.
CHA Nurse Preceptorship Program  
February 22, 2012, 8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Supporting and strengthening the work of nurse preceptors is critical to the development of new nurses and retention of the highly skilled staff registered nurses who teach them at the bedside. The curriculum for the Nurse Preceptorship Program was developed by a team of educators from hospitals and schools of nursing, and is designed to provide core content that is foundational for the role of nurse preceptor.

This one-day program includes presentations and interactive sessions covering topics such as roles and responsibilities, characteristics of a professional role model, basics of teaching and learning, tools and strategies for effective communication, principles of constructive feedback delivery, evaluating competence, delegating effectively, and more.

The Nurse Preceptorship Program will provide critical information to new nurse preceptors. The program may also be of interest to experienced RN preceptors who have either not viewed this content or would like to be refreshed on the concepts.

Connecticut Hospital Association-CHA 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 (6.0 contact hours).

For more information, click here. To register, click here.