

eProgress Notes . . . March 2010

A Monthly Publication of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, Inc.

eProgress Notes publication is a summary of regulatory and legislative news, advocacy messages, and other relevant issues affecting the delivery of hospital and health care on Long Island.

Senate and Assembly Majority Budget Proposals Elicit Mixed Reaction from Hospital Advocates

Critical that lawmakers hear from constituents this week

With the prospect of passing a state budget by April 1 already abandoned, the alternate budget plans recently presented by Assembly and Senate Democrats do not bring the state any closer to consensus and in fact cause more fragmentation. Legislators, the governor's office, and hospital leaders remain far apart on indigent care funding and cuts, the gross receipts tax on inpatient services, Medicaid trend factor cut, and readmissions policy. Legislators are now on holiday recess and bring their concerns about these unresolved budget issues home with them to their districts. That's why this week is the opportune time to reach out to legislators and emphasize the devastation cuts to indigent care and a gross receipts tax, in particular, will have on each of Long Island's hospitals.

"The two chambers present a mixed bag of restorations and cuts," said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC). The Assembly version restores about 60 percent of the indigent care funding cut proposed by the governor, while the Senate version restores nothing. The Senate plan rejects the gross receipts tax and all other taxes proposed by the governor, while the Assembly plan does not reject the gross receipts tax.

Each Long Island hospital would be hit in different ways by any and all of these proposals, depending upon volume of charity care, Medicaid patients served, and volume of inpatient services. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

Call your state legislators now, drop a note, or log onto www.helpyourhospital.org to register your opposition to any more cuts and new taxes on Long Island hospitals. Currently, under the executive budget proposal, Long Island hospitals would lose about \$46.8 million due to Medicaid cuts and new taxes. If legislators return to Albany next week having heard from mass numbers of their constituents, this will influence their budget making decisions and the ultimate outcome for each Long Island hospital.

State Legislators and Hospital Leaders Tackle Budget Issues



State legislators from Long Island met with hospital CEOs on Friday, March 12 to discuss the state's \$9 billion deficit and the governor's proposed \$46.8 million in Medicaid cuts and new taxes facing hospitals on Long Island. The briefing was sponsored by the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council.

Regarding the proposed cut to indigent care funding, Doug Melzer, CEO of Long Beach Medical Center said, "It is incongruous that the state seeks these cuts when the community needs us now more than ever."

In photo: Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick (left) and Kevin Dahill, President/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council.

Health Care Reform Becomes Law

With the president's signing of the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 on March 30, new measures governing insurance industry practices, insurance coverage mandates and subsidies, and quality improvement initiatives become the law of the land. This historic health care reform was not obtained without sacrifice and, as pieces of it are implemented over the next few years, providers, patients, and payers will see changes in the way care is delivered and reimbursed. New taxes imposed on insurers and medical device manufacturers, penalties for non-compliance on employers and individuals, and Medicare payment cuts to hospital providers were all part of the package that will now guarantee health insurance coverage to 32 million more Americans.

Long Island hospitals will absorb about \$1.8 billion dollars worth of reductions in disproportionate share (DSH) payments and updates to Medicare reimbursement rates. The cuts in inflationary adjustments will kick in right away, while the coverage expansion will take a full decade to achieve.

As the months and years progress, the health reform process will continue to undergo fine tuning. Hospitals hope malpractice reform measures and a new reimbursement formula for physician payments will be part of the changes ahead. – *Janine Logan, jlogan@nshc.org.*

News Briefs . . .

Transitional Care Will Continue

The governor's budget proposal essentially includes Senator Brian Foley's legislation to extend the current Transitional Care Unit (TCU) projects due to sunset April 1 and adds five new demonstration sites. The Assembly also passed legislation that extends the five current sites for five more years. The Hospital Council has provided the legislature with alternate language to make the existing sites permanent and expand to 35 additional demonstration sites, to be allocated regionally.

Transitional care is a level of service provided through Medicare and as such does not cost the state any money. The care is specifically geared for the patient who is recovering from an acute care episode, but is not quite ready medically to be discharged to any type of aftercare. Long Island's lone TCU demonstration project at John T. Mather Memorial Hospital has shown improvement in quality and care outcomes.

Grassroots support for this level of care is growing among Medicare beneficiaries throughout Long Island, as the Hospital Council has visited a number of senior centers. Information about the level of care rendered on these units and why the nursing home industry is fighting to fend them off is helping seniors fully understand the benefits of these units.

Partnerships Offer NSHC Members Savings

Council partnerships with **MedSave USA Inc. and Lloyd Staffing Inc.** are helping members find savings on two operational issues. MedSave USA offers medical records retrieval services. Lloyd IT assists with informational technology staffing and training. Please note the upcoming educational session for hospital Chief Information Officers:

April 22, at 10 a.m.

Lloyd Staffing Headquarters,

445 Broadhollow Rd. Suite 119, Melville

To register contact: lcurry@nshc.org; 631-963-4153

Member Hospitals

Brookhaven Memorial Hospital
Medical Center
Catholic Health Services of Long
Island

- Good Samaritan Hospital
Medical Center
- Mercy Medical Center
- New Island Hospital
- St. Catherine of Siena Medical
Center
- St. Charles Hospital
- St. Francis Hospital

East End Health Alliance

- Eastern Long Island Hospital
- Peconic Bay Medical Center
- Southampton Hospital

Long Beach Medical Center
John T. Mather Memorial Hospital
Nassau University Medical Center
North Shore-Long Island Jewish
Health System

- Franklin Hospital
- Glen Cove Hospital
- Huntington Hospital
- North Shore University Hospital
- Plainview Hospital
- Southside Hospital
- Syosset Hospital

Stony Brook University Hospital
Veterans Affairs Medical Center –
Northport
Winthrop South Nassau University
Health System

- South Nassau Communities
Hospital
- Winthrop-University Hospital

Workforce News

Health care jobs continue to be one of the more positive and stable sectors of the economy. As hospitals prepare for the influx of health information technology requirements set forth in federal laws, a range of skilled information technology managers, leaders, and technicians will be needed. These needs were discussed recently with **Mark Grossman**, regional director for the New York State Department of Labor and other DOL staff. Conversations about IT workforce needs were also held with the Long Island Forum for Technology (LIFT). On March 12, 2010, the Senate Majority held a roundtable discussion on jobs creation. Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Hospital Council, participated at the request of **Senator Brian Foley**.

Hospitals Feed the Hungry



Eddie Fraser, pantry volunteers Joesan Monroe and Kim Monroe.

Volunteers from the Bay shore Emergency Food Pantry accept a food donation from Eddie Fraser, a member of the NSHC Communications Committee and Director of Community Relations for Southside Hospital in Bay Shore. Members of the NSHC's Communications Committee collected the food during their winter food drive. In 2009, more than 2,500 clients utilized the services provided by the pantry. The pantry is housed in space provided by the Unitarian Universalist Society of South Suffolk.

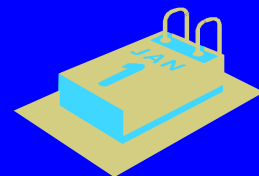
From left: Pantry volunteers Mary Peterman, Nancy Tomasik, Southside Hospital's

NSHC Committee News ...

Communications Committee . . . at its March 9 meeting, hosted by the Nassau University Medical Center, the committee was briefed by HANYS VP of Communications, William Van Slyke, on strategies and advocacy tools for fighting state budget cuts. The group also discussed hospitals' efforts to make their campuses tobacco-free and the Council's work with both county health departments on their tobacco cessation task forces. The committee also plans a region-wide public information campaign centered on patient safety and quality issues

Finance Committee ... met in March. Members were updated regarding the state budget process and Medicaid rate reforms, as well as being briefed on the future of the Medicare wage index by consultant Dale Baker.

Nurse Executives Committee . . . met in March and reviewed and revised the proposed universal orientation curriculum for nursing students and received a special briefing from Cindy Levernois, HANYS' director of workforce initiatives, on the staffing ratio disclosure law. Wendy Darwell, Hospital Council COO, reported on the status of the state budget and federal health care reform, as well as a class action lawsuit being organized regarding hospitals' automatic deduction of meal breaks from nurses' pay. The group also appointed a subcommittee to select the 2010 Nurse of Distinction Award winner.



Mark Your Calendar for NSHC Events in April

- Apr. 9 Revenue Cycle committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Apr. 9 Communications Committee, 10 a.m. at Southampton Hospital
- Apr. 13 Life Safety Committee/LI Healthcare Life Safety Assoc. . 10 a.m.
- Apr. 13 Nurse Managers Committee, 12:30 p.m.
- Apr. 14 Finance Committee, 8 a.m.
- Apr. 27 Corporate Compliance Committee, 9:30 a.m.

*Meetings for NSHC members only and are held at the Hospital Council office in Hauppauge unless otherwise noted. To register/info call: 631-963-4153.

Nurse Managers Committee ... heard from Mary Lynn Barssil of Winthrop-University Hospital on perinatal bereavement.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE SPECIAL EVENTS

AHA Annual Meeting: The American Hospital Association's Annual Membership Meeting will be held at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC on April 24 – 28. In coordination with the AHA conference, HANYS will host a congressional briefing on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 27 in preparation for visits with the congressional delegation on Wednesday, April 28. Please register for the AHA Conference at <http://www.aha.org/aha/advocacy/annual-meeting/10-index.html> and for the HANYS events at http://www.hanys.org/events/?even_id=227

HANYS Annual Meeting: Save the date for the HANYS annual meeting, to be held this year at the Sagamore Hotel and Resort in Bolton Landing on June 23 – 25.

Hospital Council Announces \$2,000 Non-Clinical Scholarship

The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC) announces a \$2,000 scholarship with optional internship for college juniors/seniors or post graduate students who are studying **Journalism, Communication Arts, or Healthcare Administration**. The Ann Marie Brown Memorial Scholarship honors the late Ann Marie Brown, who served as vice president for government and public relations for the Hospital Council from 1983 to 1993. The scholarship is administered by the Hospital Council's Communications Committee. Filing deadline is May 28, 2010. Recipient is expected to attend the award luncheon on June 11, 2010. For more information and an application go to www.nshc.org/programsandservices or call 631-963-4156.



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*The collective voice of Long Island's
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