

NorMet News . . . October 2013

A Monthly Publication of the Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association

NorMet News publication is a summary of regulatory and legislative news, advocacy messages, and other relevant issues affecting the delivery of hospital and health care in the Hudson Valley.

Individuals and Small Businesses Navigate New Health Insurance Marketplace

Enrollment process making slow, steady progress

Individuals and small business owners clamored to be among the first to use the New York State of Health insurance marketplace on October 1, 2013, the date health insurance marketplaces opened throughout the nation. At enrollment sites newly-opened throughout the state, individuals met with state-trained navigators and discovered the health plans, premiums, subsidies, and tax credits available to them, depending upon their income and household information.

Despite nearly two million hits in its first hours of operation and extremely heavy and continuing online traffic accompanied by intermittent computer “glitches,” the New York State Health Department says enrollment is progressing. In-person enrollment sites report similarly heavy volume on a daily basis, since October 1.

The Hudson Valley region is serviced mainly by a variety of subcontracted local in-person Navigator Agencies under the Community Service Society of New York, as well as the Maternal Infant Services Network of Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties and the Westchester County and Rockland County Departments of Health.

Using an online portal, navigators assist individuals, businesses, and families in understanding insurance options offered on the marketplace and in purchasing insurance. Navigators, some of whom are bi-lingual, assist individuals in completing the application for coverage, and use an online tax credit and premium rate estimator to determine whether individuals’ income levels and family size qualify them for subsidized insurance premiums, Medicaid coverage, or Child Health Plus enrollment. Using this tool, the navigators also help small business owners determine if they are eligible for any tax credits.

Individuals and business owners also can shop and enroll online at www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov or by phone through the state’s customer service line at 1-855-355-5777. – Janine Logan, jlogan@normet.org.



Navigator Luz Ayala (left) discusses health plan coverage options with Rhonda Seider.

Federal Government Re-opens, Avoids Default

Hospitals Remain Wary of More Cuts Tied to Budget Talks

The agreement reached on Wednesday, October 16, 2013 to re-open the federal government and avoid debt default carries through only to the early part of 2014 and, at that time, brings with it the threat of another standoff and the real possibility of more harmful Medicare and Medicaid cuts to hospitals. The agreement directs House-Senate negotiators to deliver a budget plan by December 13, 2013 that tackles the nation’s debt and deficit concerns. Conferees could look to cut spending

for such programs as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, while seeking higher tax revenues by closing loopholes for corporations and wealthy individuals.

The new federal government funding deadline is January 15, 2014. Congress must act by then and pass another continuing resolution in order to avoid another shutdown. The next deadline for raising the debt ceiling

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limit is February 7, 2014. During this time, the White House will be working on its version of the upcoming federal fiscal year budget.

Meanwhile, another round of automatic sequestration cuts to domestic programs occurs in January 2014. These cuts are the result of the failure of a bi-partisan “super committee” to develop a debt/deficit reduction plan by November 2011. As a result, sequester cuts went into effect earlier this year. Hospitals in the Suburban Hospital Alliance regions will endure \$629 million (2013 – 2021) in Medicare cuts due to this

sequester. NorMet’s advocacy agenda is forwarded by the Suburban Hospital Alliance. The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, which represents hospitals on Long Island, is the other hospital region served by the Alliance. – Janine Logan, jlogan@normet.org.

The American Hospital Association plans two more advocacy days in Washington – **November 19 and December 3**. Contact Elyse Oveson for more information – eoveson@hanys.org.

Member Hospitals

Blythedale Children’s Hospital
Bon Secours Community Hospital
Burke Rehabilitation Hospital
Catskill Regional Medical Center
Ellenville Regional Hospital
Good Samaritan Hospital
HealthAlliance Hospital
Helen Hayes Hospital
Hudson Valley Hospital Center
Keller Army Community Hospital
Lawrence Hospital Center
The Mount Vernon Hospital
The New York Presbyterian Hospital Westchester Division
Northern Dutchess Hospital
Northern Westchester Hospital
Orange Regional Medical Center
Phelps Memorial Hospital Center
Putnam Hospital Center
St. Anthony Community Hospital
Saint Francis Hospital
St. Joseph’s Medical Center
St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital
St. Vincent’s Westchester (Division of St. Joseph’s Medical Center)
Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester
Vassar Brothers Medical Center
VA Hudson Valley Health Care System
White Plains Hospital

News Briefs . . .

Hepatitis C Testing . . . for patients born between 1945 and 1965 takes effect January 1, 2014. The new state law requires hospitals and health service providers to offer hepatitis C testing to the “baby boomer” group.

Medicaid Global Spending Cap . . . remained within limits for the first five months of the new fiscal year, according to the New York State Department of Health’s most recent report. The state’s spending on Medicaid was \$29 million or 0.4% under projections through August 2013.

Joint Commission Top Performers . . . include eight from the Hudson Valley from among 45 hospitals in the state that achieved top performer status for their Quality Measures in 2012. The Hudson Valley facilities are: **HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley, St. Mary’s, VA Hudson Valley Health Care System, Northern Westchester Hospital, Nyack Hospital, Vassar Brothers Medical Center, Northern Dutchess Hospital, St. Anthony Community Hospital and White Plains Hospital**. These hospitals were recognized by the Joint Commission for attaining excellence in accountability measure performance during calendar year 2012. As Top Performers on Key Quality Measures®, hospitals in this category represent the top 33 percent of all Joint Commission-accredited hospitals that reported accountability performance measures in 2012. More than 3,000 U.S. hospitals were evaluated.

Blood Drive Award . . . was presented to **Vassar Brothers Medical Center**. It received the 2012 – 2013 Blood Drive Sponsor of the Year Award from the American Red Cross Blood Services New York-Penn Region.

Top Critical Access Hospital Designation . . . goes to **Ellenville Regional Hospital**. It received the distinction from the National Rural Health Association Critical Access Hospital Conference for being named as one of the Top 20 Critical Access Hospitals for Quality in the country. These hospitals scored best among critical access hospitals on iVantage Health Analytics’ Hospital Strength Index™ for Quality.

Consumer’s Choice Designation . . . goes to **White Plains Hospital**. It received the Consumer’s Choice Award from the National Research Corporation. The hospital is a nine-time winner of the award, which recognizes quality and image in health care by the Nebraska-based research corporation.

Quality Clinical Outcomes Recognized . . . by Healthgrades, Inc. at Health Quest Hospitals. **Vassar Brothers Medical Center** was once again named among America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Cardiac Surgery and Critical Care. **Putnam Hospital Center** received Five-Star distinctions for Treatment of Heart Attack and total Knee Replacement as did **Northern Dutchess Hospital**, which was also awarded Five-Star distinctions for Treatment of Pneumonia and Sepsis.

Community Health Assessment . . . is happening now throughout the state as part of the State Department of Health's 2013 – 2017 Prevention Agenda and a new federal-level IRS requirement. **Hospitals must file a comprehensive Community Service Plan with the State Department of Health through the Health Commerce System by November 15, 2013.** Hospitals conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to meet the reporting requirements of the state's 2013 – 2017 Prevention Agenda and the IRS' Form 990 charitable reporting mandate. NorMet together with the New York State Association of County Health Departments is the Hudson Valley regional collaborative for community service/benefit activities. Contact Janine Logan, director of communications, at jlogan@normet.org if you have questions and/or need assistance with any phase of the community assessment and plan activities.



Go to www.normet.org and click on this Vet Connect icon to find online links to hospitals' job banks, health care services, and other community resources. The initiative is coordinated by NorMet and members of its Communications Committee. The Vet Connect icon is also located on each member hospitals' website.



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