

Skyline news

REPORTING ON NEW YORK'S HEALTH CARE NEWS

GNYHA Readies 2001 Agenda

GNYHA is hard at work preparing for the upcoming sessions of the U.S. Congress and New York State Legislature by readying its 2001 legislative agenda. The 2001 agenda will be submitted to the GNYHA Board of Governors for approval at the next GNYHA Board meeting, on February 1, 2001. As always, GNYHA's agenda will include legislative proposals to help its member hospitals and continuing care providers meet the many challenges created by the ever-changing health care marketplace, including proposals to help hospitals deal with an increasingly dire financial situation caused by managed care abuses, measures to enhance access to health insurance for uninsured New Yorkers, initiatives to help hospitals and contin-

uing care providers continue to retain and attract the best health care personnel possible, and proposals to help members afford the technology necessary to improve quality and to comply with ever more complex State and Federal regulatory requirements.

Federal: At the Federal level, GNYHA will be working to enact legislation to help members implement the tools necessary to improve quality and safety and to help them comply with Federal requirements under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Such legislation will include the creation of new grant programs and efforts to create a Medicare reimbursement mechanism for information technology acquisition, as well as ongoing infor-

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Governor Pataki Highlights Health Care Issues in State of the State Address

On January 3, 2001, opening day for the New York State 2001 legislative session, Governor George Pataki gave his seventh annual State of the State address. In his speech, Governor Pataki highlighted several health care issues, including expanding Child Health Plus (CHP), allowing the working disabled to keep their Medicaid benefits, expanding women's health benefits, requiring background checks for nursing home and home care employees, and creating high-technology "centers of excel-

lence." Governor Pataki praised the current CHP program for insuring 530,000 children to date and expressed enthusiasm for plans to expand the program to cover up to 600,000 working New Yorkers. The Governor wants to give people with disabilities an opportunity to purchase their health insurance through Medicaid once they begin working. He will also make women's health care a priority by proposing to expand Medicaid eligibility for the treatment of cervical and breast cancer

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Thompson Nominated as HHS Secretary

On December 29, 2000, President-elect Bush announced the nomination of four-term Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson as the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). As governor, Thompson has instituted a variety of health care and welfare reforms, some of which are discussed below.

Health Insurance: Health insurance expansion has been a priority for Governor Thompson. He pushed for greater flexibility under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to implement innovative solutions to reduce the ranks of the uninsured. Through "Wisconsin BadgerCare," Governor Thompson made Wisconsin one of the first states to offer coverage to working parents of children who qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP. As GNYHA and others developed the blueprint for New York's Family Health Plus program, BadgerCare was viewed as a model. Governor Thompson has also supported the controversial idea of converting Medicaid from a federal entitlement program to a system of block grants to states.

Other Health Care Issues: Governor Thompson has expanded Wisconsin's child care programs, family planning programs, and women's health programs. With regard to long term care issues, Governor Thompson ordered more background checks on nursing home workers, expanded nursing home

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GNYHA Readies

2001 Agenda *continued from page 1*

mation systems education and training. In addition, GNYHA will be working on legislation to help member hospitals and continuing care providers deal with personnel shortages, including the worsening nursing shortage; supporting Governor Pataki's effort to secure the necessary Federal waivers to implement the Family Health Plus program; supporting legislation to repeal remaining restrictions on the ability of immigrants residing legally in the United States to gain access to health insurance coverage; supporting the enactment of HMO reforms; and supporting continued efforts to spare GNYHA hospital and continuing care members from further Medicare and Medicaid cuts contained in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. GNYHA will also be participating in the Medicare reform debate as it shapes up throughout 2001, and looks forward to working with Congress and the new Administration on legislation to help solve the problem of the uninsured.

State: In 2001, GNYHA will be working with the Governor and State Legislature on important measures to help its members deal with an increasingly dire financial situation, including measures to rein in the abusive practices of HMOs and other insurers; proposals to ensure that GNYHA members actually receive funding promised by State legislation on a timely basis to help alleviate serious cash flow problems; proposals to help enable individuals and families to more easily gain access to insurance under Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and the Family Health Plus programs; measures to repeal the restrictions on the ability of immigrants to gain access to Medicaid and Family Health Plus coverage; legislation to provide funding to enable hospitals and continuing care organizations to comply with new State requirements and to improve quality and safety, including funding for information systems; new initiatives to help hospitals and continuing care members retain and recruit the best staff available; and new proposals to help hospitals and other providers who offer enhanced services for prenatal care to receive adequate reimbursement in a Medicaid managed care environment. ■

State Funding Available for School-based Health Centers

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) has announced the availability of over \$11 million in funds for school-based health centers (SBHCs). A competitive Request for Applications (RFA) has been issued for Article 28 facilities to establish and operate SBHCs that will provide comprehensive primary and preventive health care to children and youth in a school setting. Letters of intent are due on January 12, 2001, and applications are due on February 9, 2001. Awards are expected to be announced in May 2001.

DOH's current contracts with the 157 SBHCs in New York State expire on June 30, 2001. The \$11 million available through this RFA will provide funding for a five-year period beginning July 1, 2001. Therefore, all currently operating SBHCs must

re-apply for funding if they wish to continue to receive support from the State. DOH has set aside a portion of this funding specifically to support tobacco use prevention activities among adolescents (ages 10-19) and new dental health programs for all school-age children.

According to DOH, this RFA represents one of many efforts to create a new vision for New York State's SBHCs. Information about these other efforts, including initiatives to promote mental health services or develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, will soon be available from the State.

To obtain a copy of this RFA or for additional information, contact Annette Johnson, Director of School Health Programs, Bureau of Child and Adolescent Health, at (518) 486-4966 or amj02@health.state.ny.us. ■

Governor Pataki Signs Bill Extending Community Grant Programs for Combined Senior and Child Care Centers

On December 20, 2000, New York State Governor George Pataki signed legislation extending community grant programs for combined senior citizen service centers and child day care centers. The program was due to expire on December 31, 2000. Sponsored by Senator George Maziarz (R-Lockport) and supported by GNYHA, S.7799 extends the community grants program until

December 31, 2002. The New York State Office of Aging was directed to develop pilot programs combining senior citizen service centers with child day care facilities. These projects have demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of creating intergenerational programs that meet critical social needs by reducing the isolation of senior citizens and providing day care services in the community. ■

AROUND

The Board of Directors of the Nassau Health Care Corporation has announced the interim appointment of **Richard B. Turan** as President and Chief Executive Officer of Nassau University Medical Center and A. Holly Paterson Extended Care Facility. Mr. Turan most recently served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Long Island Forum for Technology (LIFT). Prior to serving at LIFT, he spent 20 years as President and Chief Executive Officer of Briarcliffe College in Bethpage, New York. ■

State of the State Address

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and supporting a program to educate women about their risk of heart disease. To support quality initiatives in long term care settings, the Governor will propose conducting criminal background checks for all nursing home and home care employees. Finally, he proposes a \$1 billion high-tech fund for computer and medical research. The initiative creates Centers of Excellence that will include the 36 medical schools, health centers, and research institutions in NYC that are developing collaborative research projects that will transform medicine in the future. Governor Pataki is expected to release his budget the third week of January. ■

Thompson Nominated

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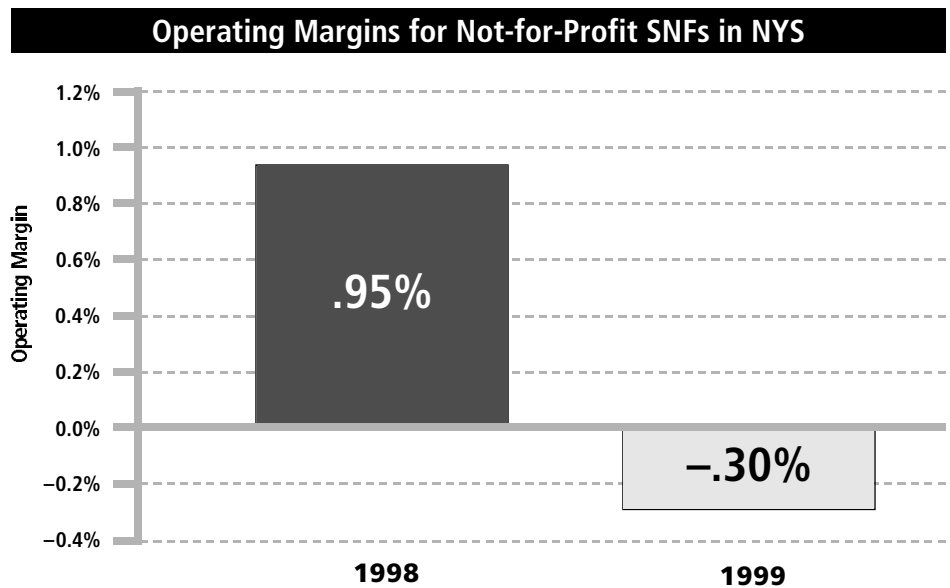
reporting requirements, increased investigations, and developed a long term care program focused on expanding community-based services and assisted living alternatives for seniors and the disabled. He is considered one of the nation's leading advocates of organ donation, and spearheaded a procurement program in Wisconsin. He also created a program to allow people with disabilities to get jobs without forfeiting government benefits, a program that has become a national model for providing access to a coordinated system of waivers from Medicaid, Medicare, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; intensive vocational rehabilitation services; and benefits counseling.

As the governor of a traditionally Democratic state, Thompson is expected to help President-elect Bush in his efforts to cooperate with Democrats. If approved by the Senate, Governor Thompson will be sworn in as HHS Secretary in early February. ■

Average Operating Margins for Not-for-Profit SNFs Declined in 1999

In a recent analysis of 1998 and 1999 Medicaid cost reports, GNYHA found that the average operating margin for not-for-profit skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in New York decreased from 0.95% in 1998 to -0.30% in 1999, a 1.25 percentage point decrease. Although for-profit SNFs in New York also experienced a decline in operating margins from 1998 to 1999, they maintained

an average operating margin of 6.2% in 1999. The decline in operating margins in the not-for-profit sector underscores GNYHA's continuing efforts to secure targeted relief at the State level for "financially distressed" nursing homes, and to augment existing Medicaid rates to ensure that they keep pace with the increasing demands that SNFs in New York State are facing. ■



Source: Residential Health Care Facility-4 Cost Reports (1998, 1999).

GNYHA Assists Members During Snowstorm

GNYHA assisted members during the significant snowstorm that hit the area on December 30-31, 2000. As is the case with all emergencies, GNYHA representatives staffed the NYC Mayor's Office of Emergency Management's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to assist members with problems they encountered during the snow-

storm, and to act as a liaison between the City and the area's health care providers. GNYHA assisted members that contacted the GNYHA desk at the EOC with requests, including those for emergency transportation and snow removal around member facilities, and responded to City agency requests for additional ambulance services in the area. ■

JCAHO Approves New Standards for Patient Safety

On January 2, 2001, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) announced that it had approved new standards for medical error reduction programs.

The new requirements for hospital accreditation cut across several key areas: leadership to encourage error reporting and reduction, proactive programs focused on high-risk areas to prevent errors, management and

analysis of information to identify risks to patients, and patient education and information. Overall, the standards emphasize the creation of an organization-wide patient safe-

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House GOP Names Thomas as Ways and Means Chair

On January 4, 2001, House Republicans selected new chairmen for the 107th Congress. Senate leaders have not yet decided how to run the evenly divided chamber. The House GOP announced the changes as a result of self-imposed term limits in 1995.

Of interest to the health care community is the new chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Bill Thomas (R-CA). Thomas previously chaired the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare Part A and other

health care issues. Thomas won the battle for the chairmanship over more senior Congressman Phil Crane (R-IL). GNYHA has learned that Congresswoman Nancy Johnson (R-CT) will become the Health Subcommittee chair. ■

JCAHO Approves New Standards for Patient Safety *continued from page 3*

ty program with accountability vested in the hospital's leadership. The standards do not require hospitals to establish new structures or offices to reduce medical errors, but mandate the integration of existing patient safety efforts. The standards also specifically note the importance of creating an environment that encourages error reporting while minimizing individual blame or retribution.

The standards for management of information call for hospitals to aggregate patient safety-related data and information to identify risk to patients, and communicate to all caregivers the organization's goals and procedures to improve organizational performance. In terms of patient education, the standards

stress that quality is enhanced when patients are engaged as partners in their own care. In addition, the standards require that patients and, when appropriate, their family members, are informed about the outcomes of care, including unanticipated outcomes.

Root Cause Analysis Training: JCAHO indicates that conducting root cause analyses and conducting proactive risk reduction activities are among the ways that an institution may demonstrate compliance with the JCAHO's new patient safety and medical error reduction standards. As part of GNYHA's ongoing commitment to assist its members with their quality improvement and medical error reduction efforts, GNYHA is providing its

members with individualized on-site training in conducting root cause analysis of adverse occurrences. To date, a significant number of GNYHA members have signed up for the training, which is designed to teach staff how to conduct and document team-based root cause analysis, identify and evaluate the causation of adverse events, and in turn identify and evaluate various approaches to performance and systems improvement. Root cause analysis focuses primarily on systems and processes, not individual performance, and is designed to identify ways, through a process of probing and addressing the roots of problems, to prevent the recurrence of adverse or sentinel events. ■

Upcoming GNYHA Briefings

Government Affairs Forum

Special Guest: NYS Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried, Chairman, NYS Assembly Health Committee

Day: Friday, January 12, 2001

Time: 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

Location: GNYHA Board Room, 555 West 57th Street, 15th Floor

New York State Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried, Chairman of the New York State Assembly Health Committee, will address the GNYHA Government Affairs Forum and provide critical insights on the health care issues that the New York State Legislature is likely to address in the 2001 session. The GNYHA Government Affairs Forum, which meets monthly, is open to all GNYHA members and is geared specifically for member CEOs, government relations officers, and community affairs representatives. For more information, or to become a member of the Government Affairs Forum, please contact Carol Kevel at (212) 506-5430. In February, the Government Affairs Forum's special guest will be the Chairman of the State Senate Health Committee, Senator Kemp Hannon.

NYS OMH 2001-02 Executive Budget Proposal

Date: Wednesday, January 24, 2001

Time: 10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon

Location: GNYHA Conference Center, 555 West 57th Street, 15th Floor

The NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) will provide a briefing for GNYHA's members on the new 2001-02 Executive Budget Proposal for mental health

services. The briefing will include an update on the rollout of OMH's new initiatives for adult and children's mental health services and will provide an opportunity for GNYHA members to pursue issues related to hospital-based mental health services, delivery of case management services, school-based services, and other issues raised with OMH Commissioner James Stone at GNYHA's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Committee December meeting. Sharon Carpinello, Ph.D., Executive Deputy Commissioner, and Linda Rosenberg, Senior Deputy Commissioner, will represent OMH at the briefing, and will be accompanied by OMH staff from the State and New York City offices. For more information, call Patricia O'Brien at GNYHA. To register, call Barbara Marino at GNYHA.

Billing Medicare Part B for Non-Physician Practitioners

Day: Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Time: 10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon

Location: GNYHA Conference Center, 555 West 57th Street, 15th Floor

This member briefing will cover Medicare Part B billing and reimbursement rules and regulations for non-physician practitioners in a hospital setting, including Medicare billing for services provided by nurse practitioners, physician assistants, clinical nurse specialists, and psychologists. For more information, contact Stewart Presser at GNYHA. To register, call Barbara Marino at GNYHA. ■