



# STAT News

Published bi-monthly by the Suburban Hospital Alliance of New York State, LLC, a consortium of 52 not-for-profit and public hospitals advocating for better health care policy for all those living and working in the nine counties north and east of New York City. **November 11, 2014**

## FEDERAL UPDATE: Congress Back to Work; Ebola Prep Funding Headlines Agenda

The hospital industry is pressing Congress for funding to help offset the costs associated with emergency preparations for Ebola response and treatment. In New York, the governor so far has identified 10 hospitals as Ebola treatment centers and issued other preparedness directives to all hospitals that involve the allocation of unbudgeted resources – staff, equipment, training – to support these directives. Hospitals are also following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols, which add to the cost of readiness. President Obama has requested \$6 billion in emergency spending to help fight Ebola here and in West Africa. The lame-duck Congress will consider the request in the coming weeks.

**Funding the Federal Government . . .** is also a pressing issue for the lame-duck Congress. The current funding expires December 11, 2014. It is likely that the Congress will authorize another continuing resolution, or funding extension, at current levels to keep the government operating.

**Other Hospital Concerns . . .** facing the new Congress early next year include correcting the Medicare physician reimbursement formula, known as the “doc fix” to avert a severe pay cut to the nation’s physicians and finding a funding mechanism to offset the expense; lifting the nation’s debt ceiling; and debate surrounding the automatic annual sequester cuts. These cuts were legislated as part of the 2011 Budget Control Act and are meant to force fiscal restraint upon Congress and the White House. Hospitals endured automatic (two-percent) sequestration cuts in Medicare reimbursements in 2013 and 2014. The next round of sequester cuts takes effect March 2015. Meanwhile separate congressional measures have added several years to the sequestration cut schedule for hospitals.

## STATE UPDATE: Insurance Enrollment Begins Nov. 15th

Open enrollment, season two for the New York State of Health insurance marketplace begins November 15, 2014 for the 2015 plan year. Enrollment ends February 15, 2015. Individuals and small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) can shop the marketplace through an online portal – [www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov](http://www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov) – by calling the state’s customer service number at 855-355-5777 or by meeting with a state-certified, in-person navigator. On Long Island, the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, one of the regional hospital associations that is part of the Suburban Hospital Alliance, is one of three state-appointed navigator agencies serving Long Island. The Hudson Valley region is serviced by the Community Service Society of New York, Maternal Infant Services Network of Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster counties and the Westchester County and Rockland County Departments of Health. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), individuals and businesses with 100+ employees must obtain health insurance by January 1, 2015 or face penalties.

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