

MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION

UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES

February 2025

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Government Relations and Special Projects – Tracey DeShields

No update for the month of February 2025

Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund

Uncompensated Care Claims

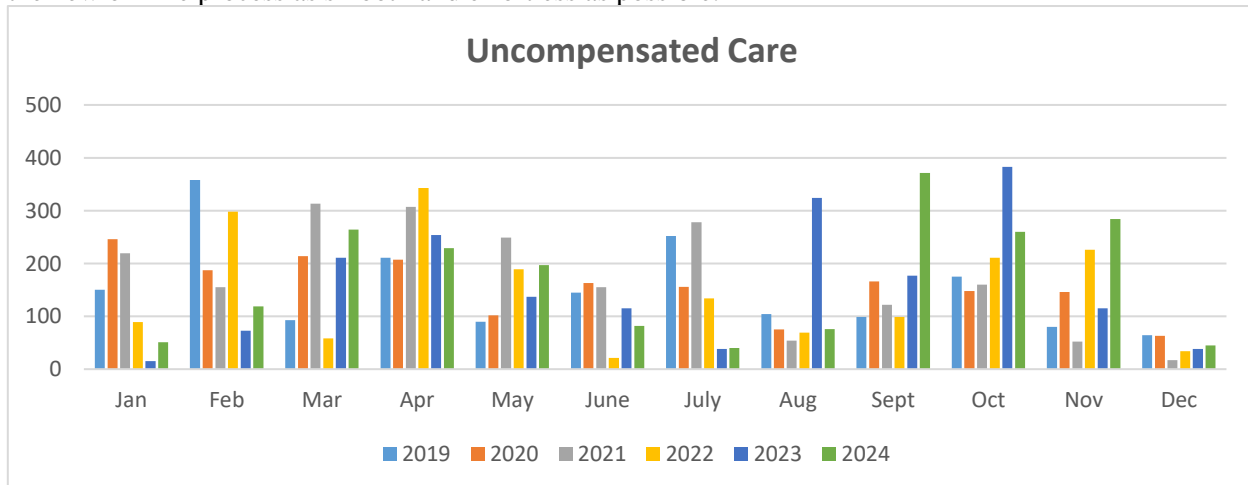
Luminare Health, the previous Third-Party Administrator that ended their relationship with MHCC in November, performed a final clean-up in December of all Uncompensated Care Claims (UCC) received into their offices by November 30, 2024. The number of claims processed for the Trauma Physicians Services Fund totaled **\$44,712.30** as shown in the chart below. There was no claims processing for the month of January.

Third-Party Administrator (TPA)

MHCC has secured a new TPA. SCAS Management Group, LLC, also known as SMG based in Milwaukee, WI was awarded the contract. The contract issued is through January 31, 2026, and has a one (1) successive two (2) year renewal option. MHCC staff will be meeting with SMG on Wednesday, February 12th for the kick-off meeting. We look forward to a successful relationship with SMG, as well as resuming claims processing by the end of February.

On-Call Costs Web Portal

Final touches are being made to the new On-Call Costs Web Portal. Due to the timeframe, and as not to delay the submission of applications for the reimbursement period July – December 2024 period, we’ve emailed all facilities and asked them to complete a paper application. We also informed them that MHCC looks forward to unveiling the new platform to them for the January - June 2025 submission period and going forward making the new on-line process as smooth and effortless as possible.



Internet Utilization

MHCC Website: The MHCC website (<https://MHCC.maryland.gov>) had 3,991 during the month of January 2025.

WTC Website had 388 visitors during the month of January 2025

Maryland Quality Reporting

Maryland Quality Reporting

Maryland Quality Reporting had 1,630 users in January, an increase of 31.0% from the previous month. The website also had similar increases in new users and sessions (increases of 27.5% and 37.4%, respectively). The website notably had a 30% decrease in the average session duration. This means that in the month of January, users, on average, spent about 90 seconds less on the website.

This month, the site received referrals of at least 10 users or more from Maryland 211 (121 or 46.4%), Maryland Attorney General (24 or 9.2%), Peoples-Law.org (18 or 6.9%), Howard County Government (17 or 6.5%), and Medicare (10 or 3.8%).

Facebook remained the primary social media referral source.

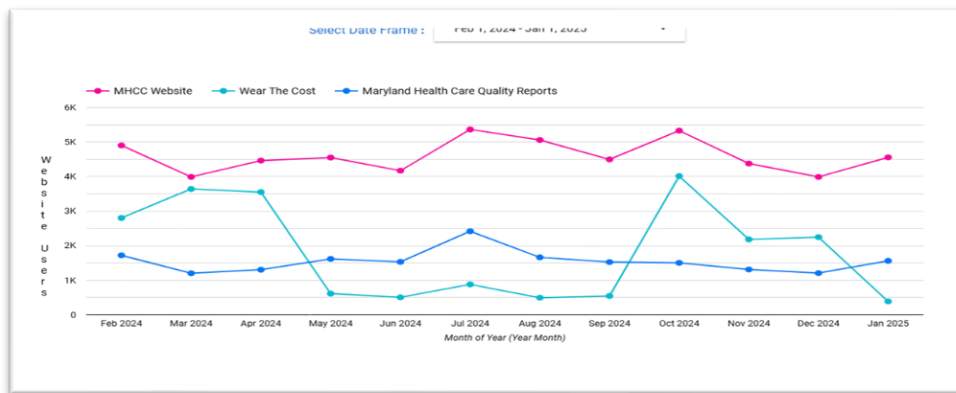


Figure 1 shows the number of website users over a 12-month period for each of the three websites maintained by Commission staff. Specific information about each website is listed above.

CENTER FOR ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Center for Analysis and Information Systems - Kenneth Yeates-Trotman, Director

No Update for the month of February 2025

Cost and Quality Analysis – Shankar Mesta

No Update for the month of February 2025

APCD Public Reporting and Data Release – Mahlet ‘Mahi’ Konjitt-Solomon

HB 570/SB 487 Study Completion

The final report for the HB 570/SB 487 study was presented to the Commission at the January 19, 2025 meeting for approval and release of the report. Staff delivered a comprehensive presentation covering the comparative analysis of contracted rates for participating and nonparticipating providers by HMOs and proposed PPOs Rules. The presentation included analysis of the No Surprises Act's impact and trends in provider network contract terminations. The presentation marks the successful completion of this legislative mandate.

Wear The Cost Contract Development

Progress continues on finalizing the five-year sole source contract with Change Healthcare (CHC) for the Wear The Cost episode development work. Staff is working to complete the necessary documentation with the goal of submitting the contract to the Board of Public Works by February 10th. This partnership will ensure ongoing development and enhancement of the Wear The Cost website.

Data Release Activities

The Data Use Agreement negotiations are ongoing with West Virginia University (WVU) and University of Colorado, as both institutions are State entities requiring specific contractual considerations. These agreements will enable access to the approved data sets once finalized. Onpoint remains prepared to generate and transfer the data upon completion of the DUA process and receipt of data fee payments.

Special Projects – Jason Caplan

No Update for February 2025

CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE FACILITIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Acute Care Policy and Planning – Eileen Fleck

Certificates of Ongoing Performance

The Certificate of Ongoing Performance (COP) report for cardiac surgery services at Luminis Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) (Docket No. 23-02-CP043) was presented at the January Commission meeting. It was the first COP application for cardiac surgery services since AAMC began its cardiac surgery program in late 2020. Compliance with conditions on AAMC's Certificate of Need were discussed and the Commission approved AAMC's COP application for cardiac surgery services for a period of four years with two conditions.

Other

MHCC staff attended two work group meetings convened with staff at hospitals to discuss the shortage of registered radiologic technologists and registered cardiovascular invasive specialist for cardiac catheterization laboratories. The shortage of these staff is an issue for most hospitals, and the work group discussed strategies that hospitals have used to address recruitment and retention of these staff. There will be at least one or two more meetings to discuss the next steps and options for addressing this issue.

Long-Term Care Policy and Planning – Jeanne Marie Gawel

Nursing Homes

The Commission approved the final regulations, COMAR 10.24.01, the *Procedural Regulations for Health Care Facilities and Services*, and COMAR 10.24.20, the *State Health Plan for Facilities and Services: Comprehensive Care Facility Services*, at the January Commission meeting. The final regulations will be published in the February 7, 2025 issue of the *Maryland Register*, with an effective date of February 17, 2025.

Home Health

The 2023 Home Health Survey was completed on January 9, 2025. There was 100 percent compliance from the providers. The survey data will be published in the MHCC Public Use Files and will be used for assessing home health need and providing data for other home health projects.

Hospice

There are no January updates.

Facility Services Planning and Policy/Certificate of Need – Ewurama Shaw-Taylor

Certificate of Need (CON)

Determinations of Coverage

- **Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASC)**

MedStar Medical Group-Southern Maryland, LLC d/b/a MedStar Shah Medical Group (Charles County)
MedStar Shah Medical Group notified the Commission of the addition of surgical specialties at the facility located at 10 St. Patrick's Drive, 3rd Floor in Waldorf. The ASC currently operates with one sterile operating room and one non-sterile procedure room. The ASC will add Plastic Surgery and Vascular/General Surgery to its specialties.

Watkins Mill ASC, LLC (Montgomery County)

Watkins Mill ASC, LLC requested to establish an ASC at 55 West Watkins Mill Road in Gaithersburg. The proposed ASC is owned by Christopher Raffo, MD. The ASC anticipates beginning surgical services on November 1, 2025. The ASC will specialize in Orthopedics and operate two sterile operating rooms and one non-sterile procedure room.

Advanced Surgery Center of Bethesda, LLC (Montgomery County)

Advanced Surgery Center of Bethesda, LLC notified the Commission of a change of ownership. The current owners, Surgical Specialty Center of Mid-Atlantic, LLC, will transfer 100 percent of the ownership interest to Aligned Orthopedic Partners/USP Surgery Centers Bethesda and six named physicians, effective January 31, 2025. The ASC will continue to operate with one sterile operating room and one non-sterile procedure room.

Johns Hopkins Surgery Series - Lutherville (Baltimore County)

Johns Hopkins Surgery Series – Lutherville notified the Commission of changes to the surgical specialties at the facility located at 10755 Falls Road, Suite 110b in Lutherville. Johns Hopkins Surgery Series – Lutherville is an ASC that currently operates with one sterile operating room and one non-sterile procedure room. The ASC has discontinued Urology and Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility procedures and has added Pain Management to its specialties.

- **Licensure**
 - **Delicensure of Bed Capacity or a Health Care Facility**

Greater Baltimore Medical Center (Baltimore County)

Greater Baltimore Medical Center notified the Commission of a plan to relinquish 27 licensed comprehensive care facility (CCF) beds in the Sub-Acute Unit. Effective February 1, 2025, the Sub-Acute Unit at Greater Baltimore Medical Center will not have any authorized, licensed CCF beds.

Larkin Chase Center (Prince George’s County)

Larkin Chase Center requested an additional extension of the temporary delicensure of 120 CCF beds to accommodate delayed inspections of the facility. Larkin Chase Center expects completion of the inspections by February 3, 2025. The Commission granted Larkin Chase Center an extension until February 28, 2025.

- **Other**

Medstar Visiting Nurses Association Inc., d/b/a Medstar Home Health Care HH7150 (Prince George’s County) Medstar Home Health Care notified the Commission of a change in address of its administrative offices. Currently, the administrative office is located at 6525 Belcrest Road, 7th Floor, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782; the office will relocate to 6404 Ivy Lane, Suite 110, Greenbelt, Maryland 20770.

Curo Health Services LLC d/b/a Heartland Health Services (Prince George’s County) Curo Heartland Health Services notified the Commission of a change in address of its administrative office. Currently, the administrative office is located at 12304 Baltimore Ave, Suite A Beltsville, Maryland 20705; the office will relocate to 11720 Beltsville Drive, Suite 900, Beltsville, Maryland 20705.

Chesapeake Medical Imaging (Howard County)

Chesapeake Medical Imaging requested a determination regarding its imaging center located at 10825 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 450 in Columbia, Maryland. Chesapeake Medical Imaging is not considered a health care facility under Health General §19-114 and imaging services are not considered a medical service under Health General §19-120. The Commission issued a Determination of Non-Coverage to Chesapeake Medical Imaging.

***CENTER FOR HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATIVE CARE
DELIVERY***

Health Information Technology Division – Nikki Majewski, Division Chief

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Symposium

Presentations for the virtual AI symposium series are being developed in collaboration with select stakeholders. The series aims to build awareness of equitable, ethical, and responsible use of AI in health care. Several sessions will be recorded in February. The series is anticipated to be made publicly available to view on demand this spring; stakeholders will be notified through various outreach initiatives. A summary of the AI regulatory landscape in health care is nearing completion and will highlight key themes from a state-level legislative scan.

Hospital Health IT Survey – Spotlights

An analysis of hospital responses to AI questions included in the annual Hospital Health IT Survey (survey) is advancing. The survey inquired about hospitals' adoption of AI technology and related governance policies for ensuring equitable and responsible use of AI. A spotlight on the integration of social needs data into hospital electronic health record (EHR) systems was completed. The spotlight incorporates survey responses related to social needs screening among hospitals in Maryland and the nation to support patient and population health.

Data Breaches

Drafting of a spotlight is progressing based on an analysis of data breaches affecting 500 or more individuals from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2024. Data was obtained from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights online portal. The spotlight will include observations from a state analysis of where the reporting entities are located and discuss local and national breach patterns and trends, including factors that cause data breaches and impacts on consumer privacy. The spotlight is targeted for release in Q1 2025.

Regulations

A review is underway of public comments on proposed amendments to COMAR 10.25.07, *Certification of Electronic Health Networks and Medical Care Electronic Claims Clearinghouses* and COMAR 10.25.18, *Health Information Exchanges: Privacy and Security of Protected Health Information* that were published in the Maryland Register (December 2, 2024 edition). The amendments support legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2021 and 2022, which requires electronic health networks (EHNs) to provide certain electronic administrative health care transactions to the State-Designed Health Information Exchange (HIE), CRISP (COMAR 10.25.07). The amendments also require CRISP to develop a consumer consent management application, operate a health data utility, and collect noncontrolled prescription drug (non-CDS) information reported by dispensers (COMAR 10.25.18). The review is anticipated to be completed in February.

Legally Protected Health Information

The sixth update on the implementation of Chapters 248/249 (SB 786/HB 812), *Health Reproductive Health Services – Protected Information and Insurance Requirements* (2023) was submitted to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee. COMAR 10.25.07 and COMAR 10.25.18 requires EHNs and HIEs operating in the State to block the exchange of legally protected health information, which includes mifepristone data and the diagnosis, procedure, medication, and related codes for abortion care. Staff participated in a quarterly meeting of the Electronic Health Record Association (EHRA) as part of an ongoing effort to support vendors with regulatory compliance. The EHRA is a national trade association of vendors that develop EHR systems.

Noncontrolled Prescription Drugs

An informational flyer was developed overviewing upcoming requirements for dispenser reporting of noncontrolled prescription drugs to CRISP. The flyer also highlights the value of enabling access to non-CDS dispense information for the treatment and care coordination of patients. Proposed amendments to COMAR 10.25.18 include requirements for dispenser reporting, which is anticipated to begin in Q4 2025. The amendments support the implementation of Chapter 296 (HB 1127), *Public Health – State Designated Exchange – Health Data Utility* (2022).

Innovative Care Delivery Division – Melanie Cavaliere, Division Chief

Practice Transformation Grant

The 10 enrolled practices in the 2024 cohort of the Advancing Practice Transformation in Ambulatory Practices Program (program) are working with practice coaches on workflow redesign. The program is based on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative milestones. The program is designed to help practices transition from volume-based services to delivering high-quality, cost-effective care within value-based care models. In 2021, MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, Care

Transformation Organization received an MHCC grant to lead practices through the program milestones. To date, the grant has supported around 72 practices encompassing 480 providers across 126 sites. Drafting of a spotlight on practice transformation, which will highlight the contribution of the program, is underway.

Learning Network

Planning continues for a March learning network event that will explore ways to optimize the role of patient and family advisory councils (PFACs). Practices establish a PFAC, which is a group of patients, family members, and caregivers working together to enhance the patient experience at the practice. Additionally, planning is underway for a *Beyond the Textbook: Real-World Medicine and Case Studies* webinar series on advanced care delivery, where key challenges and opportunities will be explored in 30-minute sessions. The first session will be on recent approaches to addressing health equity. The recorded sessions will be made available to learning network participants on MHCC’s website, with continuing education credits offered.

Primary Care Investment Workgroup

The convening of the Primary Care Investment Workgroup (Workgroup) is being planned for Q1 2025. The Workgroup will focus on establishing a reporting structure for the 2025 *Primary Care Analysis and Report*, an annual requirement under Chapter 667 (Senate Bill 734), *Maryland Health Care Commission – Primary Care Report and Workgroup* (2022). The Workgroup will also consider matters related to the Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development (AHEAD) Model, which is a voluntary initiative aimed at improving health outcomes across multiple states. States participating in the AHEAD model cohorts are: Maryland and Vermont in Cohort 1, Connecticut and Hawaii in Cohort 2, and Rhode Island along with a section of New York (Bronx, Kings, Queens, Richmond, and Westchester counties) in Cohort 3.

CENTER FOR QUALITY MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

Center for Quality Measurement and Reporting

The Maryland Quality Reporting (MQR) website

MQR Website Updates

Staff continue to work with Advanta Government Services (AGS), the website contractor, to update the [Maryland Quality Reporting](#) consumer site. Assisted Living profile pages were updated with patient characteristics (Age, Gender, Race and Ethnicity) using the most recent public use data from the CY2022 MHCC Annual Long Term Care survey. Nursing Home profile pages were updated using data from the most recent public use data from the CY2022 Annual Long Term Care survey. Profiles for 223 facilities were updated with information including ownership type, hospice affiliation, bed type and private toilets, daily room rates and services available. The nursing home Maryland comparison was updated to include several new fields, including percentage of nursing homes by type of business organization, by chain/other affiliated healthcare entity ownership, and minimum and maximum daily rates. Several long term care consumer fact sheets were updated. Additional enhancements and updated features are underway and routine updates and maintenance are ongoing. Staff continue to respond to consumer inquiries and requests for printed material received via the quality reports email.

MQR Website Traffic

Staff monitors traffic to the consumer site using Google Analytics software. Website traffic increased in January (1,562 users) compared to December (1,248 users). The most frequently viewed topics on the MQR site include assisted living, nursing homes, and the long-term care planning toolkit. Traffic to the site is presented graphically under the Executive Direction section of this update.

MQR Website Promotion

There were approximately 70 social media posts in January. Topics included Open Enrollment, Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and general promotional posts for the MQR website. These topics generally coincide with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Health Observances or other important health related events and are designed to link readers back to the MQR website. Staff also promote the MQR website using additional social media platforms such as LinkedIn.

COMR in the Community

Staff attended the annual MDH Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities conference, held at Morgan State University. These events provide a unique opportunity to share with and learn from other organizations committed to improving the lives of Maryland residents.

Hospital Quality Initiatives – Courtney Carta

HB1051 Maternal Health – Assessment, Referrals, and Reporting

Under HB 1051 the Health Secretary, in collaboration with the MHCC, must develop a Maryland report card for birthing facilities (hospitals and freestanding birthing centers) and collect the necessary information to complete an annual report card for each birthing facility in the state. Staff are working closely with MDH and other stakeholders to support this effort. Staff are exploring existing data sources and providing analytic expertise to MDH to meet the requirements of the bill.

MPSC Workplace Violence Prevention Campaign

In 2022, as a result of SB700, MHCC led a work group to develop a public awareness campaign and dissemination plan geared toward preventing workplace violence in health care settings. In FY2024, the Maryland Patient Safety Center was awarded funding by the Maryland Legislature to implement the plan statewide. In collaboration with MHCC and MHA, MPSC recently launched the campaign “It Takes Patients” with an aim to humanize health care employees and encourage compassion among families. For more information, visit <https://www.ittakespatients.org/>.

HCAHPS Collaborative

Historically, Maryland hospitals report lower levels of patient satisfaction compared to the national average. The MHCC began collecting patient-level HCAHPS data in CY2022 to explore potential health disparities based on patient perception of care across various populations and measure domains. Staff are working closely with the HSCRC and the Maryland Hospital Association on a newly formed HCAHPS Collaborative to help improve Maryland scores and increase patient experience. All Maryland hospitals were invited to participate in the collaborative. MHCC staff will present introductory analyses at the next monthly meeting.

Long Term Care and Health Plan Quality Initiatives – Stacy Howes

Nursing Home Family Experience of Care Survey

Data collection for the 2024 survey year has concluded. Over 5,000 survey responses have been received, and final data will be ready within the next one to two months.

Long Term Care Health Care Worker Influenza Vaccination Surveys

Nursing homes, assisted living facilities, home health agencies, and hospices continue to collect data for the 2024-2025 flu season.

Health Plan Quality Initiatives

Data for the year 2023 is complete, and the data has been updated on the Quality Reporting website. Staff and the contractor, HealthData Company have identified two areas of additional investigation, maternal health and

cardiovascular heal/diabetes. Staff and HealthData Company are in the process of identifying appropriate datasets and analyses to create issue briefs that will be of interest to providers and stakeholders.

Outpatient Quality Initiative – Mariama Simmons

Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (ASFs) and Commercial Insurance Network Report

In October 2024, staff began working with the Executive Director and the Director of the Center for Analysis and Information Systems (CAIS) to address the legislative request for a report on the status of ASF participation in commercial insurance provider networks; the adequacy of access to outpatient providers across the State; the cost differential between ASF and hospital outpatient services; and the impact of incorporating ASFs in the STCOC/AHEAD model. An interim report was submitted to legislature last month. The interim report provided background information on the subject and highlighted the activities to be accomplished over the next four months. Staff continue to work with industry stakeholders, CAIS and HSCRC towards a final report by June 2025.

The staff is working with the Cener for Healthcare Facilities Planning and Development to consider enhancements to the Annual Freestanding Ambulatory Surgery Facility Survey. These proposed changes include querying ASFs on their efforts to assess and address the Social Determinants of Health of their target populations as well as requiring additional financial data on operating expenses to support CON review. The staff with reach out to the industry to gather their feedback on the proposed changes.