

# **HEALTH BENEFITS E-NEWS**

## ***Department of Human Resource Management Office of Health Benefits***

***March 9, 2009***

### ***Agency Guidance Coming on COBRA Premium Assistance in Economic Stimulus Package***

The Office of Health Benefits is currently studying the impact of the COBRA premium assistance provisions contained in the recently-enacted federal economic stimulus package. The Department of Labor is required to provide model notices regarding the extended/second election period and the availability of premium reduction on or before Thursday, March 19. DHRM will send out guidance for agencies as soon as possible after the model notices are received since second election period offers must be made by April 18, 2009.

Employees who are in the state health plan and receiving severance as part of the Workforce Transition Act (WTA) will not be eligible for the federal COBRA premium subsidy if they retire or until the 12-month period of extended health benefits has been completed. The current expiration date for the COBRA premium subsidy is December 31, 2009.

### ***Southside Regional Medical Center ER Physicians No Longer in Anthem Network***

Emergency room physicians at Southside Regional Medical Center are currently not participating in the Anthem provider network that serves Commonwealth of Virginia employees. The hospital itself and its services remain in the network. If members need to be treated by ER physicians, Anthem will pay for covered services with no out-of-network penalty. However, the ER physicians group may hold members responsible for the difference between Anthem's payment and the group's charges.

Please advise your state agency employees affected by this decision to go to the nearest participating facility in an emergency. Alternative hospitals include John Randolph Hospital in Hopewell, MCV Hospitals in Richmond and Southside Virginia Regional Medical Hospital in Emporia.

### ***HIPAA Training Available on COVA Knowledge Center***

State agency human resource and payroll professionals may now go online to receive training on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy regulations. These regulations impose standards for safeguarding personal, individually-identifiable medical information, also referred to as "protected health information (PHI)." The HIPAA Privacy Rule created significant requirements and limitations in the way that PHI is handled. The course on the COVA Knowledge Center provides an overview of the HIPAA Privacy Rule and broadly describes how the regulation affects the way an employer and the agency benefits office should handle employee health information obtained from the health care plans. To access the training, log in to <https://covkc.virginia.gov> and go to the Learning Center. Select Course Enrollment and Information and use the keyword "HIPAA" to conduct your search. The training course link will be displayed.