

REFLECTIONS

Three Rivers AAHAM

Winter Newsletter

DECEMBER 2022



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President's Letter

Christine Ifft, CRCE

It's that time of the year when the leaves are gone, the sky is gray most of the time and the snow is in the air! But this is also the time of the year when we get to celebrate the holidays with our family and friends! Hard to believe that it's the end of 2022 and I am halfway through my term as your President.

I am excited to say that we were able to finally have our first fall conference since 2019! I would consider it a success and hope that all that attended felt the same way! We had a good education lineup and lots of fun throwing axes after hours! The food was abundant and so was the networking! Our vendors had a lot of great information available. We thank them so much for their generosity and support because without them, it would be much harder to provide the quality education and networking events that Pennsylvania Three Rivers is known for.

Our National ANI was in Baltimore in October and sounded like it was a great success! I was unable to attend, but our VP Alyshia Ravida went as my proxy. We snagged first place for our Reflections Newsletter! Way to go, Team!

In other news, we did lose our elected Treasurer, Tessa King, a few months ago due to a change in employment. She has moved out of healthcare, and we wish her well! With that said, the board elected in her replacement, Erica Methven! She is a Cash Applications Specialist Manager at Phoenix Physical Therapy and has a lot of accounting experience! We had a change in Committee Chairs as well. Ken Krieger has now moved from Government Relations Chair to our Membership Chair and Alyssa Kuhns was appointed to our Government Relations Chair. Welcome to Alyssa as well! We are excited to have new additions to our Board! They are our future!

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Winter meeting this year. We are hoping to have some great speakers lined up for you at our upcoming Spring meeting and that we can all come together after the hustle and bustle of the Holidays and after the snow has melted. We all understand how hard it is for some of you to leave the office, so we are hoping to continue to offer a virtual option but would really love to see you all in person! Please mark your calendars to save the date for April 21, 2023 (wow, that was weird typing in 2023!!). We will be having it at the Marriott Pittsburgh North in Cranberry.

Lots of changes being made at the National level – updates and clarification of the National By-Laws, changes being made to the certification testing and some good ideas being passed to the Membership committee. We will continue to update you all on those changes via our emails and website.

Speaking of website – we have some exciting changes happening there as well! Your Board of Directors have decided to take it to the next level and work with a professional Chapter web design company to assist us in updating and maintaining our website as a benefit to our members! We are hoping to have everything up and ready by the end of this year!

I would like to close by once again asking you all to get engaged with our Chapter. To join a committee, sit in on a Board meeting, ask questions, make suggestions, become a member and get certified. We would love to hear what you have to say, get fresh ideas, and have you involved!

Please make sure you follow Three Rivers AAHAM and National AAHAM on social media for up-to-date information. Three Rivers is on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for your convenience.

Stay safe, stay well!!! Happy Holidays!

Christine Ifft, CRCE
Pennsylvania Three Rivers AAHAM Chapter President

MEMBERSHIP

Ken Krieger, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

I would like to say “THANK YOU” if you are already a member of AAHAM. You are the reason Three Rivers AAHAM is as successful as we are. If you are not already a member, I ask you to consider joining. Also, please consider asking a colleague to join you for the next webinar or meeting and I promise they will not be disappointed as they’ll also see some of the benefits of becoming a member. We are committed to providing excellent educational programs to our members.

As this is my first time serving as Membership Chair, I am looking for help in forming a Membership Committee and looking for suggestions on improving our Membership campaign. I am also asking our Corporate Partners for their assistance in spreading the word to their clients to join AAHAM. Networking is one of the many benefits included with membership.

We believe membership in AAHAM helps you work smarter, can advance your career and offers you access to beneficial information in the field of healthcare administrative management. **Where else does a \$30 membership fee enhance your knowledge and professional growth?**

Three Rivers AAHAM, as well as National AAHAM, offers FREE membership for students. If you know a college student interested in healthcare, please pass on this link to go directly to Three Rivers AAHAM Membership page: <http://threeriversaaham.com/membership/> to join.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting in April.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions @ ken.krieger@whitespacehealth.com.

The Benefits of AAHAM Membership

Discounts on Services

AAHAM members receive substantial discounts on educational and networking programs as well as AAHAM products including:

- AAHAM Annual National Institute
- AAHAM’s Legislative Day
- Webinars
- Training Manuals

Education - Opportunities to strengthen and improve your knowledge and skills

Certification - Nationally recognized certification programs to give you the competitive edge in your career

Publications - To keep you up to date on happenings in the association and the profession

Advocacy - A voice in Washington, D.C. on legislative issues that affect your industry

Local Chapter Involvement - Opportunities for peer networking, cutting edge training, education programs and leadership development at the local level

Discount Program - Receive discounts on products and services

A Fall Conference To Remember

Alyshia Ravida, Vice President/Education Chair

The hiatus is finally over! Our annual fall conference was back IN PERSON this year on September 20-21, 2022 at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. This was our first conference since COVID – last conference being in 2019. While Nemaocolin Resort is now too costly, Sevens Springs had the right fit for our needs!

The Chapter Board of Directors met the evening before the conference for our monthly meeting to touch base on finances, bylaws, upcoming events, and many more topics. Our vendors used this time to set up their tables and prepare for the event.

Our morning began with a President's Welcome from Christine Ifft and Sponsorship Acknowledgement from Brenda Fraas, Chair of the Board. We moved right into our Morning Keynote presented by Brian Garver from Key Bridge Medical. The topic was quite appropriate: Resilience – Turning Adversity Into Opportunity. He talked about the importance of resilience and how to use it in our professional and personal life. Brian is always a fantastic speaker and really set the tone for a successful conference. We utilized our mid-morning break for coffee, pastries, and some great conversation with our vendors.

The second half of our morning was spent largely with Jolene Calla, our good friend at The Hospital & Health system Association of Pennsylvania. First, she was joined by Sandy Ykema from the Pennsylvania Insurance Department to discuss No Surprise Billing. We had some great conversation as to what is going on in the industry and the barriers that have been faced. Then, Jolene was joined by Jeff Chrobak, the new CFO of The Healthcare Council of Western Pennsylvania. They provided a great panel discussion on the latest OIG Report regarding denials of prior authorizations. We were able to view data as to how the payers in Western PA stacked up against each other. I loved hearing about how my local representative, Mike Kelly, is working on HR 3173 – Improving Seniors Timely Access to Care Act.

Lunch was followed by an Afternoon Keynote, Stacy Hurt, sharing a very personal topic on Big Shoe Empathy – How a Differently Walked Path Affects Your Own. Her personal experience and wisdom left many of us in tears. A good reminder to all of us in the healthcare industry – not only on resilience, but our journey's through the system as a patient.

After drying our eyes, we were joined by Catherine Zito from Lighthouse Healthcare Advisors to discuss Payer Contracting where she shared tips and tools for success. Very interesting for me in a room full of providers, as I worked for a payer at the time.



A Fall Conference To Remember

Alyshia Ravida, Vice President/Education Chair

We wrapped up the days' education with Lyman Sornberger, a longtime friend and member of AAHAM, in regards to Connecting and Collaborating with other Organizations. He highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships in revenue cycle.

Our evening included a happy hour to network with our peers and vendors, dinner and axe throwing at the Foggy Goggle. From my experience, it was much harder than it looked but others found it to be much easier. After learning the basics, there were games that could be played while axe throwing. Needless to say, I was extremely sore the next day!

Thankfully, day two of education started a little later for our muscles to rest! First, Steven Kusic joined us from the NRA Group to discuss the many barriers facing medical debt. It was a really helpful topic to learn more about how unpaid medical debt can or cannot affect your credit report. He also talked about how recent changes affected the way that healthcare systems collect and report bad debt.

Mid-morning we were joined by Joshua Robinson, COO of Crossroads Health to share his knowledge on Credit Balances & the Hidden Risks. He discussed how regulations, case law, and contractual obligations all involved in how credits should be handled.

We concluded our educational event with a great partnership example between AKASA and Penn Highlands. Wynne Campbell, Director of Customer Engagement from AKASA, and Heather Schneider, CFO of Penn Highlands, worked together through staffing shortages to Power Resiliency in the Revenue Cycle with Automation. It was great to see how two organizations worked collaboratively to create a meaningful patient financial experience, which enhances the bottom line.

Three Rivers AAHAM always provides great educational sessions but I felt like the overall education provided in this event was the best I've seen in a long time. Not to mention, we had a blast with our evening networking activity! A special thank you to all the Education Committee, especially Sharri Roudebush, Sharon Taube, Lisa Hennigan, Laura Moss, Christine Ifft and Brenda Fraas. This event couldn't have been as successful as it was without them all!



Treasurer's Report Summary

Erica Methven, Treasurer

Account Balances - As of 11/17/2022

Account	11/17/2022 Balance
Bank Accounts	
Non-Profit Checking xxxxxx1315	33,502.08
Scholarship	3,199.94
TOTAL Bank Accounts	36,702.02
Liability Accounts	
Sales Tax	0.00
TOTAL Liability Accounts	0.00
OVERALL TOTAL	36,702.02



Improving the Financial Health of Healthcare Providers

MEDICAL BILLING • REVENUE CYCLE MANAGEMENT • DEBT COLLECTION



Our sister companies, KeyMed Partners and Bureau of Account Management work hand in hand to help healthcare facilities and medical practices achieve maximum revenue and improve their financial health. We have extensive experience in all areas of healthcare billing, revenue cycle management and debt collection across a broad range of over 20 specialties.

SERVICES DEVELOPED & SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR:

- Hospitals
- Physician Groups
- Ambulatory Surgery Centers
- Long Term Acute Care
- Rehab/Skilled Nursing

MEDICAL BILLING SERVICES

- ✓ All-inclusive medical billing
- ✓ Coding and chart review
- ✓ Extensive insurance follow-up and denials management
- ✓ Accounts receivable reporting
- ✓ Practice management consulting

REVENUE CYCLE MANAGEMENT

- ✓ Insurance follow-up
- ✓ Patient inquiry and customer service
- ✓ Workers' compensation and auto insurance billing and follow-up
- ✓ Credit balance analysis/resolution
- ✓ Early out services
- ✓ Insurance verification and pre-authorization
- ✓ Credentialing and contract review

Bureau of Account Management is a nationally licensed, full service collection agency with extensive experience collecting debt for Healthcare Providers.

DEBT COLLECTION SERVICES

- ✓ Primary and secondary collections
- ✓ Estate verification programs
- ✓ Extended business office solutions
- ✓ Patient statement and pre-collection services
- ✓ Insurance follow-up
- ✓ Payment plan monitoring



Learn more about how KeyMed Partners and Bureau of Account Management can improve your financial health.

Certification Corner:

Brenda Fraas, Chair of the Board

Why earn an AAHAM certification?

AAHAM certification is an investment in your personal growth and your professional future. For over forty years, AAHAM's elite certification program has set the standard of excellence in Patient Financial Services and the Revenue Cycle.

It doesn't matter whether you are new to the healthcare Revenue Cycle or are a seasoned veteran, our family of AAHAM certification examinations offer a complete career ladder beginning with the Certified Revenue Cycle Specialist and culminating with the Certified Revenue Cycle Executive. We have a certification that will help advance your career.

Plus, the learning doesn't stop once you have obtained certification. Our certifications are maintained through a continuous education process. This assures you stay abreast of the important changes and updates that continually occur in our rapidly changing healthcare environment.

How does certification benefit an individual?

Earning an AAHAM certification demonstrates a high level of achievement and distinguishes you as a leader and role model in the revenue cycle industry. The certification validates your proficiency and commitment to your profession and can play an integral role in your career strategy. In many instances certification may help you secure the promotion or the job you desire.

Earning certification can help you by:

- Improving your earning potential
- Giving you a competitive advantage with current and prospective employers
- Granting you the recognition you deserve
- Providing access to the positions and promotions you seek and desire
- Building a network of peers in the influential group that shares your certification designation
- Continuing to expand your skills and expertise through continuing education

How does certification benefit an employer?

Earning an AAHAM certification demonstrates an individual's expertise. It shows they possess the knowledge to meet the industry's highest standards and the capacity to pass a rigorous certification examination. It shows commitment to their profession and ongoing career development. It also represents professionalism in the individual's pursuit of excellence to quality of service in their career and the healthcare industry.

By hiring AAHAM certified individuals and investing in AAHAM certification for your staff you can:

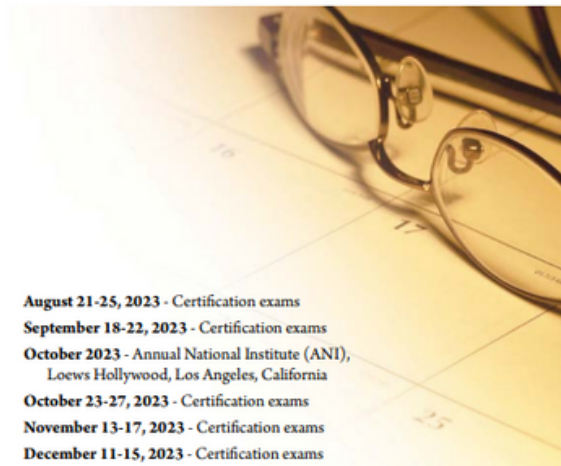
- Increase the competency of your staff
- Increase quality and productivity
- Build a strong team
- Promote ongoing education and training
- Reduce exposure to fraud and abuse

Develop a career ladder for staff

NATIONAL CALENDAR

December 7, 2022 - AAHAM Webinar
December 12-16, 2022 - Certification exams
December 31, 2022 - Legislative Award Submission Deadline
January 16-20, 2023 - Certification exams
January 24-27, 2023 - Board Meeting (in-person),
Loews Hollywood, Los Angeles California
January 31, 2023 - ANI Speaker Submission Deadline
February 20-24, 2023 - Certification exams
March 20-24, 2023 - Certification exams
April 17-21, 2023 - Certification exams
May 2023 - Annual Legislative Day, Washington, DC
May 22-26, 2023 - Certification exams
May 31, 2023 - 2023 Scholarship Submission Deadline
June 19-23, 2023 - Certification exams
July 24-28, 2023 - Certification exams
July 31, 2023 - Bill Spare National Recognition
Award Submission Deadline

August 21-25, 2023 - Certification exams
September 18-22, 2023 - Certification exams
October 2023 - Annual National Institute (ANI),
Loews Hollywood, Los Angeles, California
October 23-27, 2023 - Certification exams
November 13-17, 2023 - Certification exams
December 11-15, 2023 - Certification exams



Certification Corner:

Brenda Fraas, Chair of the Board

AAHAM certification options include:

- The AAHAM Certified Revenue Cycle Executive
- The AAHAM Certified Revenue Cycle Professional
- The AAHAM Certified Revenue Integrity Professional
- The AAHAM Certified Revenue Cycle Specialist
- The AAHAM Certified Compliance Technician

What is the AAHAM CRCE (Executive) certification?

Executive Certification is an extensive online proctored exam directed to all senior and executive leaders within the healthcare revenue cycle industry, to help equip them for strategic management of the business. This certification possesses the highest level of difficulty combining content knowledge of the business with critical thinking and communication skills.

What is the AAHAM CRCP (Professional) certification?

Professional Certification is an online proctored exam directed to supervisors and managers in the revenue cycle industry, to validate their knowledge and skills. This certification is for the individual who desires confirmation and recognition of their expertise and/or for those who aspire to the executive level certification.

What is the AAHAM CRIP (Revenue Integrity Professional) certification?

The Revenue Integrity Professional (CRIP) is an online proctored exam directed to anyone in the revenue cycle industry to help ensure that facilities effectively manage their charge master, and bill and document appropriately for all services rendered to a patient. This certification requires an in-depth, working knowledge of various revenue cycle areas and proper skill sets needed to increase revenue and reimbursement for facilities. It also ensures that proper charging takes place to maintain compliance within the insurance payer programs.

What is the AAHAM CRCS (Specialist) certification?

Specialist certification is an online proctored exam that tests the proficiency of staff involved in the processing of patient accounts and to prepare them for the many details needed to perform their daily job duties.

What is the AAHAM CCT (Compliance) certification?

Compliance certification is an online proctored exam that thoroughly tests competencies in healthcare compliance for all staff involved in the processing of patient accounts. It is intended to meet the annual employee compliance training requirements and to support individuals with professional compliance responsibilities in both institutional (hospital, health system) and professional (physician, clinic) settings.

2022-2023 National Certification Initiatives:

- On-demand (free) certification training webinars
- On-demand certification exams
- Study manuals
 - Free electronic study manual with exam purchase
 - Paper study manual available for purchase
- Reviewing and updating exam content
- Student membership and certification
- Certification social media campaign
- Summer of free certification training webinars
 - Total registrations: 4,000 (number of lines)
 - Total attendees: over 5,000
- Recorded study sessions from 2022 are available on-demand



2022 AAHAM Annual National Institute

Matthew Keeney, Communications Chair

Every year National AAHAM holds the Annual National Institute (ANI), an educational symposium for patient financial services professionals from every AAHAM chapter. During the three-day gathering, attendees can listen to a sundry of presentations and take part in various networking opportunities with revenue cycle professionals and vendors from all around the country.

Last year's ANI was held virtually in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was given the opportunity to attend and had the opportunity to listen to great presentations, however, online meetings are just not the same as meeting in person. This year, AAHAM decided to return an in-person event and I was given the opportunity to go as a representative for the Pennsylvania Three Rivers AAHAM. The ANI was held October 12 -14 at the Baltimore Hilton Inner Harbor, right next to the Baltimore Orioles Camden Yards Stadium.



Prior to attending the ANI, National AAHAM advised participants to download and sign into an app called Whova, which was used as an organizational tool for the ANI. Along with the daily agenda, Whova gave all participants an easy way to share contact information (via QR codes), organize group meetings, share pictures, send messages, push notifications, download PDF files of presentations and other important capabilities related to the event. The app would be available up to 30 days following ANI's closing so people could continue collaborating after they returned home.

After a long, beautiful autumn drive along the mountains of Northern Maryland, I arrived at the Baltimore Hilton Inner Harbor around 1:30 on Wednesday afternoon. After checking into the hotel and registering for the event, I met with fellow Three Rivers' colleagues Brenda Fraas, Alyshia Ravida, Ken Krieger and Nancy Baker for the AAHAM Awards Ceremony, where Three Rivers AAHAM once again took home the award for Best Newsletter for our Division.

When the Awards ceremony was done, our afternoon keynote speaker, author Charles Marshall, provided a humorous, inspiring, and energetic message from his book, *The Seven Powers of Success: Unlock Your Strengths, Unleash Your Dreams*. During his presentation, I was even asked to aid with his story about persistence (for which I got a copy of Charles' book!).



Following the keynote address, all attendees were invited to meet in the foyer outside the ballroom for a First Timer/New Member and Certification Awards Reception and another opportunity to network with new people. Everyone that held an AAHAM certification was given an envelope with a special gift included. We opened the envelopes at the same time and each contained cash, anywhere from \$5 to \$50.

The final official event of the evening was a Welcome Reception where we were greeted by the National Board of Directors and Chairs. There were some individual recognitions announced.

2022 AAHAM Annual National Institute

Matthew Keeney, Communications Chair

My evening did not end then, however. Along with Brenda and Nancy, I was invited to a dinner/reception hosted by the Maryland AAHAM chapter over at Dempsey's Brew Pub and Restaurant (in the famous warehouse beyond right field at Camden Yards). It was a lot of fun getting to meet colleagues from all over the country including Warren Kloter from the Colorado chapter, pictured below. I enjoyed spending time with the Maryland Chapter, as well as, the delicious food and a really cool view of the baseball park.



Thursday was filled with opportunities to attend various educational sessions that focused on a multitude of Revenue Cycle topics. Some of the sessions I attended included Leveraging Claims Data to Drive Continuous Improvement through Revenue Integrity, Improving Staff Engagement with Authentic Communication, and Outsmarting the Moving Denial Target. In between educational sessions I had the chance to peruse the vendor exhibit booths and meet with vendor representatives that were set up in the main ballroom (and you get lots of swag...so many pens). We also were provided a buffet lunch with a chance to network with more event attendees.



After the reception, the Three Rivers Chapter joined the other Pennsylvania AAHAM Chapter contingencies (along with others) at Nick's Fish House for an annual PA AAHAM event sponsored by several of our wonderful vendor partners. This year, we got to try a true Baltimore experience: eating crabs right next to the Bay! We are talking whole large crabs and wooden mallets – the whole nine yards. (I'm glad I don't have any pictures of me doing this – there's a reason people who do this on TV/movies have those plastic bibs!). This was something new to me, but thankfully I got a chance to sit and eat with my new friend, Nick, from Sunstone Consulting, who knew exactly what to do. Everyone also enjoyed the DJ with karaoke and the dance floor. This went on until about 10:00, then we returned to the hotel for the evening.

Friday was the last day of the ANI. After breakfast I attended my final educational sessions prior to lunch where winners were drawn for the vendors' raffles. The final educational session was a panel discussion focused on the "No Surprises Billing" act. Unfortunately, I missed the session to beat the Friday evening Baltimore traffic and to get home at a decent time that evening.

The AAHAM ANI was an awesome time! Not only was I given the opportunity to hear insights from leading voices in Revenue Cycle, but I was able to make new friends from all over the country. This is what AAHAM is all about...coming together to learn from one another and have fun doing so. If you ever get a chance to attend ANI, I cannot recommend it more!

Board Fun Facts



Alyssa Kuhns, Government Relations Chair

My name is Alyssa Kuhns and I am a Revenue Cycle Specialist for Phoenix Physical Therapy.

I am from Pittsburgh and joined AAHAM because I want to enhance my knowledge of revenue cycle for my current position. I look forward to networking and finding like-minded individuals to ask questions of and to share ideas.

I accepted my position as your Government Relations Chair to represent the healthcare industry, to help resolve issues and to bring awareness of issues to our government that are affecting us all.

My favorite hobbies are spending time with my children and fiancé. We are a hockey and dance family, so we spend a lot of our time at practice/tournaments and recitals.



Erica Methven, Treasurer

My name is Erica Methven and I am the Cash Applications Manager for Phoenix Physical Therapy.

I am from Indiana, PA and joined AAHAM to gain knowledge from others in our healthcare profession.

I hope that while serving on the Board as your Treasurer, we can streamline all financial processes to allow for easier tracking and budgeting.

My favorite hobby is playing board games and cards with my family.



AAHAM Legislative Day

Matthew Keeney, Communications Chair

In the years I've been affiliated with AAHAM, I've heard how important and fun AAHAM's Legislative Day (or "Leg Day") was to AAHAM's mission. Leg Day is an opportunity to meet in Washington DC and work with fellow AAHAM colleagues from all over the country and speak with our elected representatives and senators about vital healthcare legislative positions that help patients and providers. This year's Leg Day focused on three very hot-button positions: No Surprises Billing, Prior Authorizations and Medical Billing Reporting. This year's Leg Day theme, "Coming Back Together", signified how extra special it was as the first in-person event since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020.

During my time on the Board of Directors with the Three Rivers chapter Christine Ifft, Brenda Fraas and Ken Krieger have talked up Leg Day and how it was not just a great opportunity to meet with Congress, but it was a lot of fun to meet other AAHAM members from all over the country. Being intrigued, I thought why not go this year to see what all the hype about Leg Day was all about? When I discussed the idea with my beautiful wife, she thought it was a great idea, and suggested she and our 13-year-old son come along as it would be great opportunity for them to do some sightseeing around the National Mall while I was doing my AAHAM thing.



Three Rivers AAHAM contingency to 2022 Legislative Day: Wendy Wade, Christine Ifft, Michelle Carter, Brenda Fraas and Matthew Keeney

On Tuesday afternoon we arrived at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, the AAHAM Leg Day headquarters. After checking into our room, my wife and son departed to do some sightseeing, while I registered with AAHAM before attending the evening's proceedings: a welcome from AAHAM's National President and a topic overview by the National Government Relations Chair where we were given our legislator meetings for the next day and a "leave behind folder" with printouts of AAHAM's position papers. The evening ended with a "AAHAM Strong" opening networking reception completed with a corn hole tournament. When the reception was over, I met my family and was able to do some sightseeing around the Mall prior to retiring for the evening.



Wednesday morning began at 8:00 with a delicious breakfast in the conference room. After breakfast ended, several speakers from the legislature and political groups discussed the impact of upcoming legislation related to our meetings on the Hill that were being worked through Congress. The speakers also spoke on the impact of the upcoming 2022 Midterm election on healthcare legislation and what can take place because of the election. Finally, we had a panel discussion from a group focused on Medical Debt burdens and where that is currently trending.

AAHAM Legislative Day

Matthew Keeney, Communications Chair

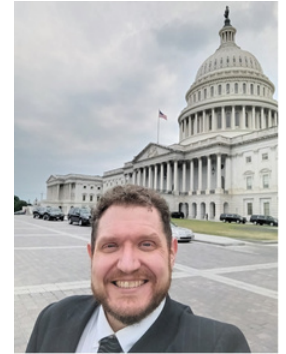


*(Left) Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) spoke on drug price transparency Wednesday morning
(Right) Panel Discussion Topic: Medical Debt Burden, History on How We Got Here and Where We Are Going*

After the morning speakers and a networking lunch, we separated so we could go to our pre-arranged Capitol Hill visits. Most of these meetings were held throughout the Congressional Office Buildings around the Capitol Building, with some Leg Day attendees having multiple meetings throughout the afternoon. Being a rookie to Leg Day, I was scheduled for only one meeting: with Ms. Maddie Daly, Legislative Assistant for Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (D – PA) in the Longworth House Office Building at 3:00 pm. Since I had some free time I was able to meet my family at the National Gallery of Art along the National Mall. We toured the gallery for a while (highly recommended, especially on a hot and humid day like that day...awesome air conditioning!), I hiked to the Longworth Building with plenty of time to call Ms. Daly to escort me into the building for our meeting. This was important because COVID and other events led to new security procedures being put in place which make it necessary to call the office with whom you are meeting and be escorted.

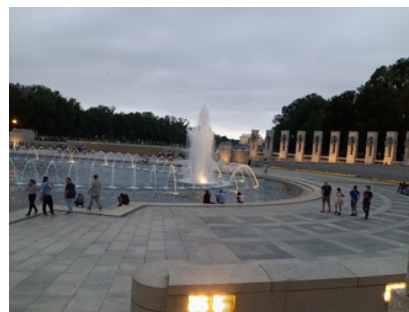
I called Ms. Daly, and within ten minutes Emily, another Legislative Assistant for Rep. Scanlon, led me to the 2nd floor office. After sitting in the office waiting area for about ten minutes Ms. Daly came out and we spoke for roughly twenty minutes. The focus of our discussion was on how AAHAM's requests helped patients as it also helped hospitals, especially with the No Surprise Billing Act.

When our discussion ended, I left Ms. Daly with our “Leave Behind folder” that contained copies of AAHAM’s position papers for review. We exchanged contact information, I thanked her for the opportunity to meet and left the office.



*(left) Office of Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (D – PA) in the Longworth Congressional Office Building
(right) Heading back to the hotel after my meeting “On the Hill”*

After I left the Longworth Building, I returned to the Hyatt via the east side of the Capitol Building and changed into some jeans before the evening’s “AAHAM One Voice One Purpose” Closing Networking Reception, which began at 5:00 pm. At the reception, we had a group discussion regarding our meetings: positive and negative takeaways as well as identifying who seemed open to help AAHAM in our positions on the Hill. When the reception ended at 6:00 pm, I met up with my family for dinner and we then went and did more sightseeing around the Mall.



Overall, my first “Leg Day” was an awesome experience and something I am very happy to have taken part in because it reminded me that no matter where you live within the industry of healthcare, when we collectively speak to our elected officials, we can bring changes that help all patients and providers. If you ever get a chance to take part in “Leg Day”, I recommend doing so.

THE NO SURPRISES ACT: WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

Charles J. Hilton

The federal No Surprises Act became effective on January 1, 2022. This Act provides protections for patients against surprise medical bills from doctors, hospitals, and air ambulances for out-of-network emergency care and for care provided by out-of-network providers at in-network facilities.

First and foremost, the No Surprises Act requires the payer plan or issuer to either make an initial payment or send a notice of denial payment within 30 calendar days after receipt of a “clean” claim. When the payer plan issues a payment to a provider under the No Surprises Act, the EOB should be reviewed carefully to make certain that the payer plan is in compliance with the Act’s disclosure requirements. If the out-of-network provider receives an initial payment and explanation of benefits from the payer plan, make certain the EOB provides (1) the qualified payment amount (QPA), (2) a statement notifying the out-of-network provider of the option to initiate the 30-day open negotiation period to resolve a payment dispute, and (3) the payer plan’s contact information to initiate open negotiations. If the 30-day open negotiation period does not resolve in settlement, then the provider may initiate the federal Independent Dispute Resolution (IDR) process after the end of the open negotiation process.

Please make sure the payer plan’s EOB provides the required contact information, which includes the telephone number or email address of the appropriate office to initiate open negotiations. A provider who has concerns that the 30-day requirement to issue the initial payment or notice of denial has not been adhered to may contact the No Surprises Help Desk at 1-800-985-3059 or submit a complaint at <https://www.cms.gov/nosurprises/policies-and-resources/providers-submit-a-billing-complaint>.

Also, if the EOB is not in compliance with the Act’s disclosure requirements and regulations as set forth above, the out-of-network provider may request an extension to initiate the IDR process by emailing a request for extension due to extenuating circumstances to FederalIDRQuestions@cms.hhs.gov or may contact

the No Surprises Help Desk at 1-800-985-3059 or submit a complaint at <https://www.cms.gov/nosurprises/policies-and-resources/providers-submit-a-billing-complaint>. It should be noted however, that even if the payer plan fails to comply with the disclosure requirements of the No Surprises Act, the out-of-network provider can still move forward with the filing of the 30-day open negotiation period if they so choose.

Also of note, if the out-of-network provider intends to open a 30-day negotiation period, the provider must use the standard open negotiation notice form to send to the payer plan as required by the Act. If the 30th business day of the negotiation period ends without settlement, the provider may initiate the IDR process. To the extent the provider sends a timely open negotiation notice form to the payer plan and the payer plan does not respond during the 30 business day open negotiation period, the provider can still initiate the federal IDR process. The federal IDR process must be initiated within the 4 business day period commencing on the 31st business day after the start of the open negotiation period. So even if the payer plan does not respond to the open period negotiation request, after day 30, the provider can still proceed to the next step, which is the Independent Dispute Resolution process.

This article includes excerpts from the August 19, 2022 CMS FAQs from the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and the Treasury regarding the final rules under the federal No Surprises Act. If you have any questions about the federal No Surprises Act or any other questions regarding healthcare reimbursement, please feel free to contact Attorney Charles J. Hilton at 412/435-0162 or email at chilton@cjhiltonlaw.com.

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