The American Hospital Association (AHA) again this year is working in conjunction with other national and local organizations to generate attention on the plight of the nearly 44 million Americans who go without healthcare coverage of any kind. The organizations are backers of national *Cover the Uninsured Week*. The 2004 event will run concurrently with National Hospital Week, May 10-16. It is organized and sponsored by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The weeklong series of activities builds on the success of the 2003 *Cover the Uninsured Week*, during which more than 900 events were held, including more than 500 health fairs hosted all or in part by hospitals.

Nationally, organized events are planned in 17 cities and include health and enrollment fairs, events within religious communities, health coverage seminars for small businesses, press conferences, campus activities and more. The AHA is encouraging hospitals and health systems in other cities to take part, as well, working with local community groups to host similar events. To learn more, log onto [http://www.covertheuninsuredweek.org](http://www.covertheuninsuredweek.org).

At its meeting on April 8, 2004, the United States Sentencing Commission voted unanimously to amend existing organizational guidelines in an effort to strengthen criteria for effective compliance and ethics programs. In doing so, the Commission made the standards for its compliance and ethics program more rigorous and put greater responsibility on boards of directors and executives for the oversight of compliance programs.

Under the amended guidelines, directors and executives now must take an active leadership role for the content and operation of compliance and ethics programs. Companies that seek reduced criminal fines must demonstrate that they have identified areas of risk where criminal violations may occur; trained high-level officials, as well as employees, in relevant legal standards and obligations; and given their compliance officers sufficient authority and resources to carry out their responsibilities. In addition, if companies hope to mitigate criminal fines and penalties, they must also promote an organizational culture that encourages a commitment to compliance with the law and ethical conduct by exercising due diligence in meeting the criteria.

The guidelines preclude the mitigation of a sentence, if an organization fails to self-report criminal misconduct in a timely fashion, or if executive or management level officials tolerated or were involved in illegal activities. Failure to follow applicable government regulations and industry standards and recurrence of similar misconduct undermine an organization’s eligibility for compliance credit under the federal sentencing scheme. And, the guidelines mandate high fines for organizations that have no meaningful programs to prevent and detect criminal conduct or in which management was involved in the crime.

The Commission also determined that there may be limited situations where an organization may need to waive its attorney-client privilege to qualify for a full, potential fine reduction. The amendments represent the first time the organizational sentencing guidelines have been modified in their history.
The 2004 Louisiana Hospital Association’s (LHA) School for Supervisory Training, which is sponsored each year by the LHA in collaboration with the Arkansas Hospital Association and the Mississippi Hospital Association, will be held June 21-24 at the C.B. Pennington, Jr. Conference Center in Baton Rouge, LA. The school has offered a dynamic course in supervisory and management principles relevant to the healthcare field for 23 consecutive years. The program is designed to meet the needs of both recently appointed and experienced healthcare supervisors and managers.

Individuals interested in participating in the 2004 program should contact John Matessino, Janet Robbins or Tevora Tabor at the LHA (225) 928-0026. The registration fee is $595 per person, which covers room, tuition, materials, meals, and refreshments for the four-day course. For cancellations filed through June 4, a full refund will be made. Cancellations made after June 4 but before June 15 will be subject to a $100 processing fee. Materials about the school were distributed in the Arkansas Hospital Association’s April 15, 2004 Thursday Mailing packet.

Arkansas Medicare Services, the Medicare Fiscal Intermediary for Arkansas, is holding a forum for comments on the accreditation requirements for sleep labs in the state. The meeting will be held Tuesday, June 15 in the Argenta conference room of the Medicare Services building, 515 West Pershing Blvd. in North Little Rock. The session will begin at 9:00 a.m. Those planning to attend should call Sue Smith, (510) 918-7422, or Suzanne Baldwin, (510) 301-6889, to register. Attendees are asked to bring any documentation to be reviewed, unless it has previously been submitted to Medicare for approval.

Hospital CEOs interested in offering staff members a unique opportunity to learn about disaster readiness and response should look closely at a program operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The program is conducted at the Noble Training Center (NTC) located at Ft. McClellan, AL. The NTC is a national medical “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) training center and the only hospital in the U.S. devoted to disaster readiness training for hospital personnel. Its mission is to create, train, and evaluate the national medical team response to acts of terrorism as well as natural and technological disasters.

Formerly the Noble Army Community Hospital, the NTC was placed under the direction of the federal Department of Health and Human Services in 1999 and converted into a WMD response/training center. Today, the center serves two basic purposes. One is to be a mock hospital training environment for conducting drills that couldn’t be carried out in a functioning hospital. The second purpose is to act as a beta testing site for new innovations of DHS’ medical sector.

Class sizes for the program are usually around 60-65 people, including teams from 8-10 hospitals. Individual hospital teams that go through the program typically include a hospital executive, a nurse executive, an emergency physician, an emergency department manager and a chief facilities officer. Hospitals are encouraged to include a local EMS administrator and public health leader in their team, as well. The five-day training programs are held Monday through Friday and there is no cost for instruction, transportation or housing. Tentative dates for upcoming sessions are October 25-29, 2004; January 10-14, 2005; May 23-27, 2005; and August 29-September 2, 2005. To learn more, go to http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/NTC.
JCAHO Proposes Patient Safety Goals

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has released its proposed 2005 National Patient Safety Goals and Requirements for public review and comment. Hospitals and others interested in submitting feedback on the proposed goals must complete an online “field review” by April 30. Among the changes for hospitals, JCAHO is proposing new goals for reducing the risk of harm from patient falls and the risk of surgical fires.

The JCAHO also is proposing that hospitals develop plans for implementing bar-code systems for patient identification and for matching patients to their medications or other treatments by January 1, 2007. The JCAHO board of directors is expected to adopt the goals, pending the results of the field review, sometime this summer. The American Hospital Association is reviewing the goals and plans to submit comments before the April 30 deadline. To view the potential goals and complete an online field review, go to http://www.jcaho.org/accredited+organizations/05_npsg_fr.htm and click on “Hospital.”

DOL Healthcare Job Training Grants

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently awarded another $13.5 million in grants under an initiative launched last month to help prepare workers for critical healthcare jobs. The grants are part of the president’s High Growth Job Training Initiative. The initiative’s goal is to prepare workers for job opportunities in high growth sectors such as healthcare.

According to Emily Stover DeRocco, assistant secretary for employment and training at DOL, “The programs supported by these grants will serve as models for the public workforce system to equip workers with skills needed to hold good jobs at good pay and continue providing Americans with quality healthcare.” To learn more about the funded programs, go to http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/OPA2004655a.htm.

Grants Include Nurse Faculty Loans

The Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration has announced two new competitive grant programs scheduled for awards in fiscal year 2004. They include $4.8 million for the Nurse Faculty Loan Program, which provides loans to nursing students pursuing advanced degrees to teach nursing; and $400,000 for the Health Careers Adopt a School Demonstration Program, to develop model partnerships between community-based organizations, schools and health professionals that expose underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students to health careers. For more on the grants, see the Federal Register notice under “Health Resources and Services Administration” at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a040420c.html.

New DOL Overtime Rules

The U.S. Labor Department has issued its final regulations governing overtime eligibility under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The regulations are intended to clarify which “white collar” workers are entitled to overtime pay. The new “FairPay” rules guarantee overtime protections to workers earning $23,660 per year or less, and clarify that licensed practical nurses and similar healthcare workers generally are entitled to overtime pay. In addition, the final regulations retain previous law regarding the overtime rights of registered nurses, meaning if they are eligible for overtime now they likely will remain so, according to the American Hospital Association. For more on the final regulations, visit http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/fairpay/main.htm.
(Newport) **Newport Hospital and Clinic, Inc.** is expanding its neurodiagnostic services, making a wider array of studies available to people in and around Jackson County. The hospital is offering electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction studies. The conduction studies evaluate the ability of the body’s nerves to conduct electrical impulses, while EMG examines electrical activity in the muscles.

(Rogers) **Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas**, which operates **St. Mary’s Hospital**, learned April 20 that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. of Bentonville has pledged $5 million to the system’s capital campaign, which is raising money for a new $140 million health center in Rogers. The 500,000-SF campus is scheduled to open in July 2007. It will be anchored by a 200-bed, 350,000-SF medical center. The campus will include cardiology, orthopedics, neurological and outpatient services, as well as a medical office building accommodating 90 physicians.

The donation will finance new technology, implement new operational systems, pay for learning labs and create a technology information center at the new campus, located on the east side of I-540. Wal-Mart’s Wal-Mart/Sam’s Club Foundation will pay the donation over five years, giving $2 million this year and $1 million each during the next three. Including Wal-Mart’s pledge, the capital campaign has raised about $12 million of its $40 million goal.

(Salem) **Fulton County Hospital** received approval from voters in an April 13 special election for a half-cent sales tax designated for hospital operations and maintenance purposes. The proposal won 83% of the vote. The county-owned facility previously received no funding from the county. Hospital administrator Frank Wise thanked voters “who understood that this is a matter of survival.” Tax supporters said the new revenues are crucial for local medical care and economic development.

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### The AHA Calendar

**April 2004**

29-30  AAHE (Engineering) Annual Meeting and Trade Show, Clarion Resort on the Lake, Hot Springs

30  So, You’re a Hospital Supervisor – Now What?, Arlington Hotel, Hot Springs

30  AFMC Quality Conference, Embassy Suites, Little Rock

30  ArkAMSS (Medical Staff Services) “Introduction to Credentialing” Workshop, White County Medical Center, Searcy

**May 2004**

5  So, You’re a Hospital Supervisor – Now What?, Holiday Inn Select, Little Rock

5-7  SAHPMM (Purchasing/Materials Mgrs.) Annual Meeting & Trade Show, Clarion Resort on the Lake, Hot Springs

6  AHAWCSIT (Worker’s Comp) Conference, Ramsey, Krug, Farrell & Lensing Conference Center, Little Rock

7  ASWHC (Social Workers) Spring Conference, St. Vincent Infirmary Medical Center, Little Rock

12  AHA Grants/Foundation Forum, Holiday Inn Select, Little Rock

13  AHAA (Auxiliary) Board of Directors, AHA Headquarters, Little Rock

14  AHA Board of Directors, AHA Headquarters, Little Rock

14  Arkansas Health Executives Forum, Saline Memorial Hospital, Benton

20  Hospital Emergency Preparedness Vendor Fair, Holiday Inn Select, Little Rock

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