



The primary mission of the American Hospital Association (AHA)

is to advocate on behalf of the nation's hospitals and health systems on issues that impact their organization, their patients and their communities. Through our representation and advocacy activities, the AHA ensures that members' perspectives and needs are heard and addressed in national health policy development, legislative and regulatory debates, and judicial matters. Our advocacy efforts focus on the legislative and executive branches and include the legislative and regulatory arenas.

A summary follows of just some of the ways in which we work for, and with, hospitals.

A Hospital Voice on Capitol Hill . . . and Beyond

TELLING THE HOSPITAL STORY

Whether it's through personal visits with lawmakers, sending letters to federal regulating agencies, sharing your story with the media, or testifying before congressional or regulatory committees, the AHA is there, ensuring that hospitals have a seat at the table and a strong voice as decisions that affect your organization and patients are made.

Every day, AHA staff take to Capitol Hill to tell the hospital story, working with lawmakers and their staff to educate them on the issues and share the hospital field's concerns. They're there to make sure lawmakers understand the real-world implications of legislation under consideration and to argue for legislation on emerging issues of importance to the field. AHA staff also advocate with federal regulators on pending guidance and regulatory changes, attending in-person meetings, providing expert testimony and sending dozens of detailed comment letters highlighting the impact proposed changes could have and suggesting alternative solutions.

GETTING MEMBERS INVOLVED

Of course, the most effective advocate for your hospital and community is you, and our members play a key role in all of our advocacy activities.

Action Alerts. As issues of importance to hospital leaders arise, the AHA issues *Action Alerts* urging members to contact their legislators or federal regulators and share the impact of potential cuts or regulatory changes on hospitals, patients and their communities. As a result, hospital leaders across the country share their stories and take their concerns directly to the decision-makers.

Advocacy Days. At the AHA, we like to say that every day is advocacy day. But several times a year at critical flashpoints, we urge members to join us in Washington, D.C., to take the hospital field's message directly to legislators on Capitol Hill. These days provide opportunities for legislators and their staff to hear firsthand the impact that legislative proposals could have on hospitals, patients and the communities they serve. They also help hospital leaders build and nurture these valuable relationships.

Advocacy Alliances. The AHA's *Advocacy Alliances* provide members with another way to engage legislators on the specific issue or issues

that have a direct impact on their ability to continue providing quality health care services in their communities. Current alliances address coordinated care, the 340B program, graduate medical education and the special needs of rural hospitals. Activities include special briefing calls and emails to keep members up-to-date on key developments, special breakout sessions at AHA Advocacy Days, direct member outreach and other issue-specific resources.

The AHA Annual Membership Meeting. Each spring, thousands of hospital leaders converge on Washington, D.C., for the AHA's Annual Membership Meeting to hear the latest political and regulatory developments, share ideas and best practices, and celebrate the incredible work being done to serve patients and communities in hospitals across the nation. At the conclusion of the meeting, attendees, under the leadership of their state hospital associations, converge on Capitol Hill to amplify the hospital field's message with lawmakers.

A ROLE IN GOVERNANCE AND POLICY-MAKING

The AHA offers members many opportunities each year to play an active role in shaping our policies and setting direction for the association.

Members can play a formal role in association governance and policy formation through the AHA's Board of Trustees, Regional Policy Boards, Governing Councils and committees.

Members also can take part in the AHA's seven Constituency Sections – a unique blend of forum and network, linking members with shared interests and missions. Through the sections, members put political, economic and market-driven issues on AHA's agenda where they help shape AHA services and policy. Each section is guided by a governing council composed of 20-24 individuals representing health care leadership from some of the country's leading hospitals and health systems, and serve as representatives of their member's peers.

In addition, the association each year creates short-term groups to advise on various policies. In 2013, task forces and advisory groups were convened on a wide range of subjects, and member input was sought through special forums for children's hospital executive leadership, health care system leaders and the acute/post-acute hospital continuum.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

As the national voice for hospitals, the AHA uses a wide range of strategies to promote hospitals in the media. In national and local news, traditional and social media, and print, television and radio, the AHA advocates for hospitals on issues important to our members. The AHA also equips members with tools and strategies to help respond to media inquiries on difficult and challenging issues.

Hospitals are gateways to care, economic contributors, centers of innovation and leaders in quality and safety improvement – and it's critical to provide that perspective to media across the country. To find out the latest in the AHA's ongoing mission to share the hospital story with the public, sign up to follow the AHA on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.

AHAPAC

The AHA supports the AHA Political Action Committee (AHAPAC), as authorized by federal law. In the 2013 cycle, AHAPAC supported more than 270 candidates, attended more than 570 campaign events, and raised more than \$2.27 million.

AHAPAC is funded by voluntary donations from its qualified members and other eligible hospital leaders. Eligible individual contributors to the PAC are subject to a \$5,000 calendar year limit. Individuals desiring additional information on their eligibility to participate or about the activities of AHAPAC may contact AHAPAC staff at (202) 638-1100.

THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE

Protecting Patient Care, Keeping Hospitals Strong

The Coalition to Protect America's Health Care, of which the AHA is a founding member, for more than a dozen years supported hospital advocacy initiatives through television, radio, print and online advertising that informs the public about the important role hospitals play in the lives of all Americans. Recently, the Coalition made a pivot to online and digital communications as a cutting-edge way to engage hospital supporters in online communities that would support hospital advocacy. Hundreds of thousands of supporters have responded to the Coalition's email, Facebook and Twitter messages, building a solid foundation for strong grassroots response.

For more information about the Coalition's mission and how you can help support it, visit www.protecthealthcare.org.

PROVIDING IDEAS AND INFORMATION

Keeping policymakers and the public aware of emerging trends in America's hospitals and the broader health care field, AHA's policy research provides essential facts to educate the public and effectively influence policy. It also ensures members have all the tools necessary to illustrate the issues critical to their communities.

We also regularly provide members with data showing the impact of particular proposals on their organizations and snapshots of their quality data. In addition, AHA's RACTrac survey continued to collect

data on hospitals interactions with Recovery Audit Contractors (RACs) so that the AHA can educate regulators and the field on difficulties in working with the contractors.

Special Reports and Analyses. AHA research reports examine key issues to inform the policy-making process. These include the *TrendWatch* series, a periodic AHA publication that reports on the latest trends affecting hospitals and the health care system (now conducted in collaboration with *Avalere Health*), as well as other AHA-sponsored studies and Chartbook, a compendium of the latest trends impacting hospitals.

Recent highlights include a look at the value of provider integration, the burden associated with RACs, and how hospitals are using electronic health records to generate clinical quality measures.

More information, including a complete library of AHA studies, fact sheets and reports, can be found at www.aha.org by clicking on "Research & Trends."

Data. The AHA Annual Survey is completed online by most U.S. hospitals, and profiles a universe of more than 6,500 hospitals. It has more than 1,000 inputs covering an organization's structure, service lines, staffing, expenses, physician organization structures, beds and utilization. This data is made available through several electronic and print resources, including the AHA Guide and AHA Healthcare DataViewer.

For more information, visit www.healthforum.com.

Making Sense of the RAC Program. As RAC audits continue to mount, the AHA's RACTrac survey is collecting impact information from 2,400 hospitals nationwide to expose the administrative burden, inappropriate payment denials and persistent audit process problems associated with the RAC program. The quarterly reports have proved to be a valuable tool to assist hospitals in taking proactive steps to reduce their vulnerability to RAC payment denials. In 2013, more than 2,700 participants joined RACTrac quarterly webinars to receive a RAC policy update from AHA staff and review the latest RACTrac results.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: REAL STORIES, REAL IMPACT

The AHA's Community Connections is an initiative to help hospitals reaffirm their important role as a valued and vital community resource that merits broad public support. To date, AHA's Community Connections has featured almost 700 hospital-based programs that work daily to improve community health from hospitals across the country.

Using various communication vehicles, including AHA NewsNow, Facebook and Twitter, the AHA highlights many of the case examples as part of the "America's Hospitals: Caring for Patients, Strengthening Communities" effort.

For more on Community Connections, visit www.ahacommunityconnections.org.