



# SNAPSHOTS

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## News and Views from the Safety-Net Association of Pennsylvania

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### PA House Unanimously Adopts Resolution Recognizing the Vital Role of Safety-Net Hospitals

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives has adopted a resolution officially recognizing the existence of safety-net hospitals in Pennsylvania and calling on the General Assembly to “take into account the special situation of these vital hospitals when implementing public policy.”

The resolution, adopted unanimously by the House on November 26, defines safety-net hospitals as those that “provide a portion of their services to low-income patients – Medical Assistance, Medicare SSI, and uninsured patients – that is greater than that of 75 percent of the hospitals in Pennsylvania.”

The resolution’s definition of “safety-net hospitals” is identical to the definition developed by SNAP, which promoted the resolution and lobbied for its passage.

“This is a big step in the right direction for SNAP and the safety-net hospitals that we represent,” declared SNAP president Charlie DeBrunner.

“For the first time, we have every single member of the House – urban and rural, conservative and liberal, Republican and Democrat – acknowledging that there really are hospitals that play a special role in caring for the poor in Pennsylvania and that these hospitals require special consideration when state officials develop and implement public policies for providing health care services to the poor and paying for those services.”

The resolution also cites the importance of ensuring the financial viability of safety-net hospitals as a key to preserving Pennsylvania’s health care safety net.

SNAP hopes that official recognition of the vital role that safety-net hospitals play in assuring access to health care will provide a strong springboard for next year’s Medical Assistance rate negotiations and other initiatives that the group intends to launch in 2003. ■

### SNAP Holds First Membership Meeting

The Safety-Net Association of Pennsylvania held its first membership meeting on November 22 in Harrisburg.

While discussing a wide range of issues, members – primarily CEOs and CFOs of participating hospitals – quickly zeroed in on the Medicaid rate agreement that expires next spring and agreed that SNAP should develop and advocate its own rate proposal on behalf of safety-net hospitals. That proposal should examine potential new methodologies for determining eligibility for Medicaid DSH payments and for calculating those and other Medicaid payments.

Members also approved position papers on how the state should use unspent adultBasic and CHIP funds and on several other key issues and authorized staff to begin advocating these positions in upcoming meetings with members of the General Assembly and Governor-elect Rendell’s transition team as well as appointees to positions in the Rendell administration. ■

#### What is SNAP?

The Safety-Net Association of Pennsylvania represents the interests of private, acute-care hospitals that play the leading role in caring for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the uninsured residents of the commonwealth. Safety-net hospitals are the twenty-five percent of hospitals in Pennsylvania that care for the highest combined proportion of uninsured patients, Medical Assistance recipients, and Medicare SSI recipients and that therefore constitute the state’s health care safety net. As a result of the patients they serve, safety-net hospitals face a significant, continuing, disproportionate challenge to their financial health. Today, there are forty-eight safety-net hospitals in Pennsylvania out of 192 acute-care hospitals in the state overall.

*For further information about the Safety-Net Association of Pennsylvania or any of the information or views offered in SNAPshots, please contact Charles DeBrunner, president, at 717-234-6970.*