



PEPPER Dashboard: How Optum data highlights actionable details not provided to your hospice by Medicare [Learn More](#)

Tip: Log in to the [NHPCO website](#) first to easily access member-only links.

TOP STORIES

What's New with NHPCO's 2024 Education?

NHPCO is a leading provider of flexible, affordable, high-quality education for hospice and palliative care professionals. Check out these new and updated 2024 educational offerings:

- [Webinars](#) – The 2024 Webinar Series will consist of multiple miniseries offerings that individuals and organizations can purchase independently, focused on specific topics. Webinars offer great value at only \$35 per webinar with unlimited organizational logins to live sessions, continuing education credits, and on-demand access for six months.
- [Hospice Manager Development Program](#) - Hospice MDP is the only comprehensive training program that provides hospice-specific information and helps managers develop the skills they need to succeed. Hospice MDP enables participants to earn their Level I or Level II designation with a combination of instructor-led and self-paced courses. Register now for the next [MDP Foundational Course, Level I](#), starting January 29, 2024. Members receive a special rate and further discounts are available for group registrations.





Hospice PEPPER Distribution to Be Delayed Through Fall 2024

In November, the CBRPEPPER [website](#) went down. In response, NHPCO reached out to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requesting an update and a timeframe for an expected fix. The website recently provided an update indicating that there will be a temporary pause in distributing comparative billing reports (CBRs) and Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Reports (PEPPERs) in effect through the fall of 2024. The website also indicates that CMS is working to improve the quality and accessibility of these reports and will be releasing a Request for Information (RFI) soon. NHPCO is reaching out to CMS for additional details and will share more information as the situation develops.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 23: Finance/Information Systems Chat – [Hospices' Top Three Roadblocks to Transparent and Effective Communication](#)

January 24: Clinical and Operations Management Chat – [Increased Survey Activity and Readiness: How to Prepare and Manage the Various Types of Audits](#)

January 24: Social Work Chat – [Regulatory Updates, Social Work and the IDG: Understanding the Potential Role of MFT and MHC in Hospice](#)

January 25: [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group Meeting](#)

February 6: Integrative and Rehabilitation Therapies Chat – [Community Conversation: Hopes, Goals, and Challenges in the New Year](#)

February 7: Bereavement Professional Chat – [New to Bereavement](#)

REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

CMS Publishes Hospice MFT and MHC Guidance

On November 3, the CMS released the [calendar year \(CY\) 2024 Payment Policies under the Physician Fee Schedule and Other Changes to Part B Payment and Coverage Policies](#) final rule, which implements provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, to include mental health counselors (MHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) as part of the hospice interdisciplinary group (IDG) beginning January 1, 2024. In response to NHPCO's request for additional clarity about these services under the hospice benefit, CMS published an [MFT and MHC Q&A Document](#). Any questions can be directed to regulatory@nhpco.org.

MODELS & DEMOS

Updated Deadline: CMS Requests Information on the VBID Model

In December, CMS released a [request for information](#) (RFI) on the Value-Based Insurance Design (VBID) Model to help inform potential future Model policy development. This RFI seeks information on various aspects of the VBID model, particularly hospice care, including hospice access and network adequacy considerations. This RFI also includes questions regarding health equity, including flexibilities that would enable Medicare Advantage Organizations to target VBID benefits based on certain factors. Comments are due to the VBID Mailbox at VBID@cms.hhs.gov by **Friday, February 16**.

NHPCO will be submitting a response to the RFI and is soliciting feedback from its members through [a Qualtrics survey](#). To ensure your comments are included in the final response, please complete the survey by Wednesday, February 7. Any questions can be directed to innovation@nhpco.org.

QUALITY

Open Door Forum (ODF)

CMS held a Home Health, Hospice, and DME Open Door Forum on Wednesday, January 10. CMS staff communicated that there are no updates on the HOPE Tool and that a Q&A document regarding the addition of marriage and family therapists (MFTs) and mental health counselors (MHCs) to the Interdisciplinary Group will be available soon. Members are encouraged to sign up for the [CMS ODF Mailing List](#) to receive future communications regarding Open Door Forums. A recording and transcript of the ODF will be posted at [CMS Open Door Forum Podcasts and Transcripts](#).

Evaluation of Grief Support Services (EGGS) Data Submission Deadline

Data Submission Deadline: Data submission for the second half of 2023 is due by January 28, 2024 for the period including July 1 through December 31, 2023. Surveys must be submitted by January 28 to be included in 2023 data.

About EGSS: The EGSS survey is a members-only resource designed to evaluate an organization's grief support services from the perspective of the recipients of the services. The survey takes a comprehensive approach by including questions on a wide range of services, many of them optional, so that hospices may tailor the survey to reflect the specific services they offer. For more information, visit the [EGSS Survey](#) webpage.

Revised Dashboard: An improved EGSS dashboard will be available to NHPCO members in 2024. If your organization is interested in implementing the EGSS survey to better evaluate your grief and bereavement services, please reach out to egss@nhpco.org.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

New Format for 2024 NHPCO Webinars: Focused Miniseries

Based on your feedback, the [2024 NHPCO Webinar Series](#) will take deep dives into focused topics via a miniseries approach. The miniseries topics are outlined below, and information on continuing education credits can be found on the webinar series landing page. To purchase, please visit the page linked above or the [Webinar Registration and Pricing](#) page.

- January 18 – November 21 | Six Instances | Quality & Regulatory
- February 1 – March 11 | Six Instances | [Substance Use Disorder](#)
- May 9 and 23 | Two Instances | Pediatrics
- June 6 – July 18 | Four Instances | Palliative Care
- October 10 – November 7 | Three Instances | Volunteer Management

Continuing education credits will be purchasable after the live event for \$10 to participants who attend the entire event and complete the session evaluation. Social workers will also be required to complete a quiz. More information will be available as each series is planned.

2024 NHPCO Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference

[IDC2024](#) is the premier conference for hospice and palliative care teams and individuals. This year's conference focuses on opportunities and challenges on the front lines. As a fully virtual conference, IDC2024 enables organizations and individuals to maximize participation while minimizing cost and reducing time out of the field. [Register today and save with our early bird rates!](#)

WE HONOR VETERANS

WHV and Opus Peace – Nurturing the Nurturer: Caregiver Distress

On Wednesday, January 24 from 3-4:30 p.m. E.T., We Honor Veterans welcomes Opus Peace founder, Deborah Grassman, NP and Executive Director, Angie Snyder, MSN, MHA, CHPN for a presentation on managing caregiver distress. Join to learn about stress, secondary trauma, and the caregiver brain. Nurses are eligible to receive 1.5 CEUs. [Register here!](#)

MEMBER UPDATES

MyNHPCO Volunteer Management Community Mentorship Program

Need some guidance as a Volunteer Coordinator? Or maybe you have some valuable insights to share as a mentor? The Volunteer Management Mentorship program application window is open until January 19, 2024. [Mentor Application](#) | [Mentee Application](#) | [Returning Mentor Application](#)

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

2023 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report

The [National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report](#) assesses the performance of our healthcare system and identifies strengths and weaknesses, as well as disparities, for access to healthcare and quality of healthcare. Quality measures are grouped into six priorities: patient safety, person-centered care, care coordination, effective treatment, healthy living, and care affordability.

Health Equity Fellowship for Trainees

The [Health Equity Fellowship for Trainees](#) is part of Health Affairs' national initiative to advance equity in health policy and health services scholarly publishing. Fellows receive mentorship from Health Affairs authors and editorial staff, and gain insight into creating manuscript submissions that are more likely to be accepted by the journal or another journal within the fellowship. The deadline for application is February 15.

Healthcare Models for Persons with Multiple Chronic Conditions from Populations that Experience Health Disparities

This [grant from the NIH](#) will support research designed to study the effective adaptation, integration, and implementation of recommended guidelines of care of persons with multiple chronic conditions from populations that experience health disparities. If interested, the deadline to apply is February 5.

NHPCO PODCAST

Season 2, Ep. 9 "The Future of NHPCO and NAHC"

On this episode, Melinda Gruber, Chair of the Board of Directors for NHPCO, and Ken Albert, Chairman of the Board for the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, join the podcast to discuss the future of both organizations and the continuum of care. [Tune in](#) to learn more about the affiliation between both organizations and what next steps lie ahead in 2024.

MyNHPCO COMMUNITIES

Upcoming Chats Not to Miss

As a member of NHPCO, you have free access to specialized chats with peers from across the country through the [MyNHPCO Communities](#), including:

- [Hospices' Top Three Roadblocks to Transparent and Effective Communication](#) - Join the MyNHPCO Finance/Information Systems Community Chat on Tuesday January 23 at 3 p.m. Learn about the best-in-class leadership assessment tools from [Blackmor, CPA](#), and learn to identify known roadblocks and unknown blind spots to effectively navigate 2024's biggest threats to hospice care.
- [Regulatory Updates, Social Work and the IDG: Understanding the Potential Role of MFT and MHC in Hospice](#) - Join the Social Work Community chat on January 24 from 1-2 p.m. ET to discuss the new CMS requirements for marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors in hospice. Patrick Harrison, Senior Director, Regulatory and Compliance, NHPCO will cover the new regulations and respond to questions from committee and audience members about the implications for hospices and the relationship with social workers on the IDT.
- [Increased Survey Activity and Readiness: How to Prepare and Manage the Various Types of Audits](#) - You're invited to the MyNHPCO Clinical and Operations Management Community chat to discuss the various types of federal audits, what entities you may be dealing with, what the order of appeals may look like, and how to manage the increased workload. On Wednesday, January 24 at 3 p.m., presenters will share experiences from the group on how they have managed recent audits and who does what to ensure timely submission and compliance along the way.
- [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group](#) - Don't forget to register for the MyNHPCO Spiritual Caregiver Community peer-led support group on Tuesday, January 25 at 3:30 p.m. to join a peer-led support group with a focus on spiritual care leadership and mentoring. This group provides a safe space for guidance, enhancing professional performance and development, providing mentoring and leadership direction, and supporting all clinicians who provide spiritual care in an interdisciplinary setting.

- **[New to Bereavement](#)** – Are you new to bereavement or looking for a refresher? Join the Bereavement Professional Community chat on Wednesday, February 7, 2-3 p.m. ET to learn about items paramount to a bereavement staff member's success, including regulations related to bereavement services and the fundamentals of the role of the bereavement counselor.

Chat Recordings Now Available

MyNHPCO Community chats are recorded and posted for your convenience. Here are the recent chat recordings now available:

- **Pharmacist Community Chat Recording** – [Why the Buzz About Buprenorphine? Overview of Buprenorphine for Pain Management in Hospice](#)
- **Spiritual Caregiver Community Chat Recording** – [Back to Basics: What Services Do Spiritual Caregivers Provide?](#)
- **Workforce Community Chat Recording** - [Understanding and Battling Staff Burnout](#)
- **QAPI Community Chat Recording** - [Hospice Quality 101](#)
- **Volunteer Management Chat Recording** – [NHPCO & MyNHPCO Library and Resources Recap](#)

The full [chat schedule](#) is available on MyNHPCO. You must be logged in to access details on MyNHPCO Chats. Please also note that to view some chat recordings, you may have to join the appropriate MyNHPCO community. Chats are a unique opportunity for professional communities to learn together; continuing education credits are not available.