

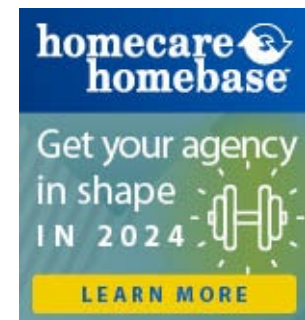


Tip: Log in to the [NHPCO website](#) first to easily access member-only links.

TOP STORY

NHPCO Submits Comments to MedPAC

On Wednesday, January 24, NHPCO [submitted comments](#) to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) on its updated hospice workplan and 2024 recommendation to Congress. In November 2023, MedPAC introduced the [updated hospice workplan \(PDF\)](#) which includes focusing the commission's efforts in years ahead on hospices' effect on Medicare spending, the effect of the hospice aggregate cap, non-hospice spending for beneficiaries enrolled in hospice, and end-of-life care for beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Earlier this month the [MedPAC commissioners unanimously voted](#) to approve the recommendation for no update to the Medicare hospice base payment rate in 2024. Although MedPAC did not recommend a cut to the hospice aggregate payment cap which is positive, the recommendation to not increase the base payment is a concern. NHPCO will continue to work with MedPAC to educate on the importance of hospice as well as share the struggles providers are facing.



Need for CMS Oversight Reform Highlighted in New ProPublica Article

A ProPublica article published today, [Medicare Certifies Hospices in California Despite State Ban on New Licenses](#), highlights that despite increased hospice program integrity oversight by CMS in 2023, "four states continued to drive most of the growth of new Medicare-certified hospices in the country, with two-thirds of all certifications taking place there." Last January, NHPCO, in partnership with other national organizations, urged CMS and Congress to [enact targeted program integrity recommendations](#) to stop bad actors that do not live up to the standards of high-quality care expected from members of the community. Many of those recommendations [have been enacted](#) in 2023, helping create what ProPublica labels a "banner year" for hospice reform. Yet, as the article makes clear, further, targeted oversight improvements are needed to root out bad actors and prevent future fraud. NHPCO [continues to work with lawmakers and regulators](#) to advocate for hospice care to stay true to its core values.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 29: Hospice MDP – [MDP Foundational Course](#)

February 1: Webinar – Substance Use Disorder Miniseries: [Neurobiology of Addiction Impacts for Seriously-Ill Patients](#)

February 5: Webinar – Substance Use Disorder Miniseries: [Substance Use Disorder Considerations for the Seriously Ill](#)

February 6: [We Honor Veterans Office Hours](#)

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

NHPCO Finalizes 2023 Hospice Audit Survey Report

Last year, NHPCO was joined by three other national associations in conducting a hospice audit survey to solicit feedback from our members on specific hospice audit experiences and challenges. This survey closed on October 31 with 133 responses received. Responses were substantive and provided detailed information about the specific situations, challenges, and successes experienced by hospices during the audit process. In January, NHPCO completed a [report](#) summarizing findings from this survey, which we shared with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Any questions can be directed to regulatory@nhpco.org.

NHPCO Meeting with CMS Regarding Hospice Audit System Challenges

On January 19, NHPCO met with leaders from the Center for Program Integrity (CPI) at CMS to discuss challenges with the system of hospice audits, including how poorly structured and targeted audits can disrupt hospice operations and harm patient access to care. The meeting included NHPCO staff leadership and representatives from member hospices. CPI staff were engaged in the discussion and indicated they would consider feedback in the effort to identify ways to improve the hospice audit process. NHPCO will continue to identify opportunities to engage with CPI in the future.

NHPCO Updates COVID-19 PHE Waiver Guidance

NHPCO recently updated a May 2, 2023 regulatory alert titled 'Final CMS Guidance for the Expiration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.' Find the updated version [here](#).

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 submit 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

Quality Connections

End of 2023 Program Year: The Quality Connections 2023 program year will end on January 31, 2024. All activities completed through that date will be included in the year-end [Achievement Map](#) update that will occur in mid-February, and the Quality Connections portal will be closed to members from February 1 through February 16. Organizations that have earned rings or completed the program will receive an achievement logo to add to their online and print collateral, demonstrating their commitment to quality improvement.

Measures of Excellence (MOE) Credit: Quality Connections participants who submitted four quarters of MOE data in 2023 should log in to the Quality Connections portal and complete the attestation to receive a second MOE credit in the Measurement Pillar. Please reach out to qualityconnections@nhpco.org with questions.

About QC: Quality Connections is NHPCO's core program for continuous quality improvement for hospice providers and professionals. Visit the [Quality Connections](#) page or reach out to qualityconnections@nhpco.org to learn more.

NHPCO Health Equity Certificate

Individuals who participated in 17 out of the 24 Project ECHO: *Equity Where it Matters* sessions and completed program evaluation requirements will earn an NHPCO Health Equity Certificate. If you attended at least 17 sessions throughout 2023, you can complete previous session evaluations and knowledge checks you may have missed by **January 28, 2024** to receive your certificate. For access to past evaluations and knowledge checks from Project ECHO sessions attended, visit the [Project ECHO website](#). Please reach out to innovation@nhpco.org if you have any trouble accessing the links.

Measures of Excellence (MOE) Fourth Quarter Data Submission

Fourth Quarter Data Submission Deadline: MOE data for the fourth quarter (Oct. – Dec. 2023) is due on **January 28, 2024**. Please reach out to moe@nhpco.org with any questions.

MOE Dashboard Update: For members who submit MOE data, a new page is now available on your Dashboard. *Rates – Falls, Medication Errors, and Infections* provides patient safety data by overall rate as well as incident rates per 1,000 patient days. Members are encouraged to download the recently revised [Measures of Excellence User Guide](#) for more information.

About MOE: [Measures of Excellence \(MOE\)](#) is a quarterly data collection tool and dashboard that organizations use to track operational and clinical data to inform high-quality care. The quarterly MOE Dashboard allows organizations to compare themselves to others for benchmarking and the MOE National Report provides data that supports a comprehensive review of national participant performance. The MOE Dashboard and National Report are exclusive NHPCO member benefits.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

2024 NHPCO Webinar Miniseries | Substance Use Disorder

Join expert faculty for a six-part webinar series on substance use disorder for seriously-ill and end-of-life patients. Each webinar will be held from 12 to 1:30 p.m. ET.

1. February 1 | [Neurobiology of Addiction Impacts for Seriously-Ill Patients](#)
2. February 5 | [Substance Use Disorder Considerations for the Seriously Ill](#)
3. February 26 | [Substance Use Disorder Treatment Approaches and Modalities in Seriously-Ill Patients](#)
4. February 29 | [Substance Use Disorder Considerations in the Hospice Setting](#)
5. March 4 | [Substance Use Disorder Considerations in Palliative Care](#)
6. March 11 | [Psychosocial, Emotional, Ethical, and Legal Aspects of Substance Use Disorder](#)

View [details on the series](#) and each webinar, including learning outcomes and faculty.

2024 Hospice Manager Development Program Schedule

About MDP: The Hospice Manager Development Program (MDP) is the only comprehensive management training program that provides hospice-specific information and helps managers develop the skills they need to meet the challenges and changes they face managing programs, systems, and people. Visit the Hospice MDP [Upcoming Courses schedule](#) for more information, rates, and registration.

Managing the Changing Organization - February 12 – March 11: Managing change and the strong reactions it elicits can be difficult. This module will teach specific skills and strategies managers can use to learn to understand change, lead through it, and thrive after it. The course is now [open for registration](#).

More to come in 2024:

- [Managing Conflict in the Workplace](#): March 4 – April 1
- [The Interdisciplinary Team: Key Skills for Hospice Managers](#): May 6 – June 3

WE HONOR VETERANS

We Honor Veterans Office Hours

Join the We Honor Veterans' team for Office Hours on Tuesday, February 6, 4-4:30 p.m. ET. WHV participants of all levels are welcome to bring questions regarding level reports, website support, and more. [Sign up today!](#)

MEMBER UPDATES

Membership Orientation Call

New to NHPCO or need a refresher? Welcome! NHPCO's monthly membership orientation calls provide an opportunity for members to connect and share valuable insights about NHPCO membership. This call is designed to help members maximize the benefits of NHPCO membership. Join the Membership team monthly on the second Friday from 2-3 p.m. ET. Your membership is important to us and we're here to support you every step of the way. [Register for February 9 orientation call](#).

Make the Most of Your Membership

Sign up for NHPCO's [Monthly Membership Tips today!](#) Learn about the latest offerings and any hidden gems you may have missed.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Topical Guide: Intergenerational Engagement

The 2023 U.S. Surgeon General's [Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community](#) calls attention to the importance of social connection for individual health, community-wide metrics of health and wellbeing, and the significant consequences when social connection is lacking. The [Commit to Connect](#) initiative from the Association for Community Living aims to increase awareness and availability of programs that address social isolation and loneliness. This [topical guide](#) from the initiative introduces programs that are utilizing intergenerational engagement as a method to address social isolation and loneliness as well as tips for organizations to build their own intergenerational programming.

The Role of Work in Health Disparities

This [grant from the National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) will support research to identify pathways and mechanisms through which work influences health outcomes and status among populations with health disparities, and how work functions as a social determinant of health. If interested, the deadline to apply is February 5.

Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research Pilot Grants

The [University of Southern California Alzheimer's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease Related Dementias Resource Center](#) for Minority Aging Research will support three pilot grants supporting junior scientists for one-year projects focusing on cognitive decline and/or Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. If interested, the deadline to apply is February 16.

NHPCO PODCAST

Season Finale Out Now!

On the "NHPCO 2024 Member Offerings" episode, NHPCO's Director of Education, Sarah Bal, and Manager of Member Engagement, Carla Smith, join to speak on the many offerings that members can take advantage of including webinars, MyNHPCO Chats, and 2024 conference attendance. [Tune in to learn more](#). All NHPCO Podcast episodes can be found on Apple, Spotify, and major podcast streaming platforms. Stay tuned for more information on the next season of the podcast later this year.

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:

- **[Community Conversation: Hopes, Goals, and Challenges in the New Year](#)** - You're invited to the MyNHPCO Integrative & Rehabilitation Therapies Community Chat on Tuesday, February 6, 2-3 p.m. ET to discuss program-related and individual professional goals for this coming year. Bring questions, stories, successes, and frustrations to share in a supportive environment. We all offer therapies that enhance quality of life and overall wellbeing and yet, we know there are myriad challenges in delivering these services to the folks who need and deserve them. We are stronger as a community and will benefit from one another's creative ideas and mutual support.
- **[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:

- **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](#)
- **Finance/Information Systems Community Chat Recording** - [Hospices' Top Three Roadblocks to Transparent and Effective Communication](#)
- **Social Work Community Chat Recording** - [Regulatory Updates, Social Work and the IDG](#)
- **Clinical and Operations Management Community Chat Recording** - [Increased Audit Activity and Readiness: How to Prepare and Manage the Various Types of Audits](#)

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.