



PEPPER Dashboard: How Optum data highlights actionable details not provided to your hospice by Medicare

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TOP STORY

Quality Connections

2023 Program Year Concludes – Congratulations Participants!

The 2023 Quality Connections Program Year has come to an end. All activities completed through January 31, 2024 will be included in the year-end [Achievement Map](#) update that will occur on February 16. Participating members received their program year achievement emblems via email earlier this week.

NHPCO is proud to celebrate participants in the 2023 program who collectively closed 361 achievement rings. Of the 300 participating programs, 83 organizations earned top recognition as a "four rings" program. Notably, four-ring achievement increased nearly fourfold from 2022, with the number of organizations closing rings increasing by nearly twenty percent and the total rings achieved increasing by eighty-nine percent. The breakdown below provides a closer look at participant achievements. Congratulations to all 2023 QC participants!

Organizations that have closed four rings for two consecutive years:

- AuthoraCare Collective
- Bluegrass Care Navigators
- Delaware Hospice - Dover Office
- Delaware Hospice, Inc. - Delaware Office
- Delaware Hospice - Milford Office
- Delaware Hospice - Pennsylvania Location
- Hope Healthcare
- Hospice of Hilo dba Hawaii Care Choices
- Hospice of the Chesapeake
- Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, Inc.
- St. Croix Hospice, MN
- Trustbridge, Inc.
- Vitas Healthcare, Broward
- VITAS Healthcare, PA
- VITAS Healthcare – Citrus
- Vitas Healthcare Program 77
- Vitas Hospice, Miami

Organizations that have closed four rings for three consecutive years:

- Bluegrass Care Navigators
- Delaware Hospice, Inc.



- Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, Inc.
- St. Croix Hospice

2024 Program Year Enrollment – Opening Tomorrow

We are excited to share that the 2024 Quality Connections program, beginning tomorrow - February 16, 2024 – will include over twenty-five percent new or updated content since the previous year, including activities related to advocacy and legislative action, survey preparedness, patient safety, and more. If your organization is interested in participating, email QualityConnections@nhpco.org to get started or visit the [Quality Connections webpage](#) for more information. New participants are also encouraged to join the [Quality Connections Walk-Through](#) on February 26 at 2 p.m. ET.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 15: [We Honor Veterans Office Hours](#)

February 20: Professional Education and Organizational Development Chat – [The Power of Storytelling](#)

February 21: Volunteer Management Chat – [Volunteer Love and Recognition](#)

February 22: [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group Meeting](#)

February 22: Webinar - [Journey Through Heart Failure](#)

February 27: CEO/Executive Director Chat – [VBID/MA](#)

February 26: [Quality Connections Walkthrough](#)

February 29: [Data and Surveys Overview Session](#)

February 29: [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group Meeting](#)

REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

CMS Releases Proposed Rule to Strengthen Oversight of Accrediting Organizations

On February 8, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a [proposed rule](#), *Medicare Program: Strengthening Oversight of Accrediting Organizations and Preventing Accrediting Organization Conflict of Interest, and Related Provisions*. This rule aims to increase oversight of CMS-approved accrediting organizations (AOs), which survey healthcare providers and suppliers who participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. CMS also published an accompanying [fact sheet](#). Comments on the proposed rule are due by 5 p.m. ET on Monday, April 15.

CMS Announces Call for Nominations for 2024 Health Equity Award

CMS has announced a call for nominations for the [2024 CMS Health Equity Award](#). This award is intended to acknowledge organizations that demonstrate reduced disparities in healthcare quality, access, or outcomes among vulnerable populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, and those living in rural areas. CMS will recognize awardees at the [CMS Health Equity Conference](#) May 29-30. [Nomination forms](#) should be submitted to omh@cms.hhs.gov, with the subject 'ATTN: CMS Health Equity Award' by March 13.

QUALITY

Project ECHO Miniseries: Best Practices in Dementia Care

NHPCO, in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association, will be hosting a new [Project ECHO miniseries](#) beginning March 7. This seven-session, weekly miniseries focuses on implementation of evidence-based dementia care, specifically in serious illness and at the end of life, and will support and enhance the ability of providers across the continuum of care to understand the unique needs of persons living with various facets of cognitive impairment. Members are encouraged to

[register for the miniseries](#), which will be hosted via Project ECHO's dynamic iECHO platform. Reach out to projectecho@nhpco.org with any questions.

CMS Open Door Forum (ODF)

CMS will hold the next Home Health, Hospice, and DME Open Door Forum on Thursday, February 22 at 3:30 p.m. ET. Members should [register here](#) and are also 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](#).

HQRP Updates

Providers can now access May 2024 Provider Preview Reports in their CASPER folders. The preview period lasts from February 14 to March 16, although reports will be available for an additional 30 days after the preview period ends. CMS encourages providers to download and save their Hospice Provider Preview Reports for future reference, as they will no longer be available in CASPER after this 60-day period. For more information about preview reports, visit the [CMS HQRP webpage](#).

CMS has also published new resources for hospice providers related to the Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP). The [Hospice Comprehensive Assessment QC Background and Methodology Fact Sheet](#) provides an overview of the Hospice Comprehensive Assessment Quality Measure, including clarification of scoring methodology and FAQs. In addition, the [HIS Manual](#) has been updated to reflect minor changes in terminology related to the Consensus-based Entity (CBE). The manual changes do not impact current data sets and no changes have been made to the content of the HIS Admission or HIS Discharge. Members are encouraged to visit the [HQRP Announcements and Spotlight](#) webpage for more information.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

New Pop-Up Webinar: *Journey through Advanced Heart Failure*

On February 22, 2-3:30 p.m. ET, [join this pop-up webinar](#) created in collaboration with the American Heart Association to learn strategies for working with patients who have advanced heart failure. Topics include prognostic indicators, improving goals of care conversations, and strategies for supporting patients with advanced heart failure and their caregivers throughout the continuum of care.

2024 NHPCO Webinar Miniseries | Substance Use Disorder

Join expert faculty for a 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 26 | [Substance Use Disorder Treatment Approaches and Modalities in Seriously-Ill Patients](#)
2. February 29 | [Substance Use Disorder Considerations in the Hospice Setting](#)
3. March 4 | [Substance Use Disorder Considerations in Palliative Care](#)
4. 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.

WE HONOR VETERANS

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Toolkit

March 29 is Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, an opportunity to provide Vietnam Veterans the hero's welcome they never received. As we prepare to recognize this day, we invite you to review our Vietnam-focused resources and guides for honoring Veterans.

- Host an educational event featuring one of our [Veteran-focused resources](#).
- Familiarize yourself with the [history of the Vietnam War's impact](#).

- Get inspired by the [Welcome Home events](#) our hospice partners have hosted in previous years.
- Review our updated [Veteran Pinning Ceremony Guide](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) and utilize our [Veteran Certificates of Recognition](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) in your next honor ceremony.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

NAM Scholars in Diagnostic Excellence

This program funded by the [National Academy of Medicine \(NAM\) and the Council of Medical Specialty Societies \(CMSS\)](#) is designed to develop leaders who drive the implementation of effective strategies to raise awareness of diagnosis in medicine; support diagnostic excellence, including diagnostic safety, quality, and equity; and reduce diagnostic errors at the national level. Scholars from a broad range of disciplines will participate in educational sessions, cohort activities, and networking opportunities. If interested, the deadline to apply is March 1 at 3 p.m. ET.

Hillman Innovation Programs

These grants from the [Rita Hillman and Alex Foundation](#) support leading-edge, nursing-driven interventions that target the needs of marginalized populations. Three different programs support initiatives in early or expanding stages of development. If interested, the deadline for letters of intent is February 27, at 5 p.m. ET.

MEMBER UPDATES

Elevate Your Hospice and Palliative Care Professional Candidate Pool

The NHPCO Career Center provides members access to a high-quality hospice and palliative care candidate pool dedicated to continuous improvement. By leveraging the power of a trusted association, you tap into a talent pool of candidates with the training and education needed for long-term success. Don't miss this unique opportunity to be seen by an exclusive audience of the best and brightest in hospice and palliative care. Visit the [NHPCO Career Center](#) to post your job today!

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:

- **[The Power of Storytelling](#)** - You're invited to the MyNHPCO Professional Education and Organizational Development Community chat on Tuesday, February 20, 1–2 p.m. ET to hear from speaker [Rob Stenberg](#) on the profound power of storytelling and how we can harness it to inspire change, spur action, and connect with others at a deeper human level. You'll learn why our brains are wired for stories, what makes stories stick with us for decades, and time-tested story structures used by enduring tales across history.
- **[Volunteer Love and Recognition](#)** - Volunteers are a wonderful and important piece of hospice care. During this chat, presenters will discuss big and small ways to show your volunteers you appreciate all that they do. Join the chat on February 21 at 3 p.m. ET.
- **[VBID/MA](#)** - Join the MyNHPCO CEO/Executive Director Community chat on Tuesday, February 27 at 1 p.m. ET to hear from NHPCO's [Rory Farrand, APRN-BC, MS, MA, MSN](#), VP of Palliative and Advanced Care & [Alix Ware, JD, MPH](#), Director of Health Policy, as they review highlights from the most recent VBID-Hospice Benefit Component report, outline changes to the program that went into effect in 2024, and discuss potential

impacts to hospice and palliative care providers as the program continues to evolve through 2030.

- **[Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group](#)** - Don't forget to register for the MyNHPCO Spiritual Caregiver Community peer-led support group on Thursday, February 29 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.

Chat Recordings Now Available

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

- **Integrative & Rehabilitation Therapies Chat Recording** - [Community Conversation: Hopes, Goals and Challenges in the New Year](#)
- **Bereavement Professional Chat Recording** - [New to Bereavement](#)
- **Development/PR/Marketing Chat Recording** - [Open Office Hours for Development/Public Relations/Marketing Professionals](#)
- **Nurse Chat Recording** - [Good Boundaries and Self Care Go Hand in Hand](#)
- **Spiritual Caregiver Chat Recording** - [Going Home: Exploring African American Spirituality at End of Life](#)

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.

NewsBriefs is a weekly publication provided to members of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

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