

Build a Strong Referral Network

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

TOP STORIES

New Resource! NHPCO Hospice Staffing Framework

Developed by a combined Quality/Regulatory workgroup and based on the recognition of the diverse nature of hospice care, the new [NHPCO Hospice Staffing Framework](#) helps hospice providers assess several factors that may impact staffing to determine whether their current staffing framework is appropriate for their organizational needs. The framework utilizes an assessment process to help determine optimal staffing levels for hospice programs, including an analysis of the model of care delivery, characteristics of the patient population served, environmental considerations, and quality and financial outcomes.

Members are encouraged to download the framework and its associated At-A-Glance one-pager from the [NHPCO Quality Resources](#) page and attend [Regulatory and Quality Office Hours](#) next week for a deep dive!



CMS to Sunset VBID Hospice Component at the end of 2024

On March 4, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [announced](#) the termination of the hospice component of the VBID Model, effective December 31, 2024. CMS cited feedback from providers, beneficiaries, and MA Organizations (MAOs) about their experience with VBID as the reason for discontinuing the hospice component of the model. CMS will no longer accept applications for the calendar year (CY) 2025 Request for Applications. This means hospice will no longer be a part of the VBID model beginning January 1, 2025. Hospice providers currently contracted with MAOs will continue with their contracts for CY 2024. CMS will issue additional guidance later this year. Learn more in NHPCO's [policy alert](#) and [press release](#).

National Volunteer Week (April 21 – 27) – Outreach Materials for Members

National Volunteer Month is April, and April 21-27, National Volunteer Week, is celebrated by hospice and palliative care providers across the nation. The U.S. hospice movement was founded by dedicated volunteers, and volunteers continue to play a vital role in hospice today. We want to call attention to NHPCO's [member-only National Volunteer Week outreach tools](#):

- Recognition and Outreach Document – Ideas and examples for providers
- Document Templates
 - Press release template
 - Proclamation template
 - Letter to the Editor sample
 - Op-ed sample
- Ad Slicks – three full and three half pages
- Social Media Graphics – three each for Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn

Volunteer Week is also the perfect opportunity to let your volunteers know how much their commitment means to your organization by nominating your star volunteer for the [2024 Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice Awards](#). The nomination period opens on March 20 and will remain open until April 30. We look forward to celebrating with you soon!

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 8: [Membership Orientation Call](#)

March 11: Webinar - Substance Use Disorder Miniseries: [Psychosocial, Emotional, Ethical, and Legal Aspects of Substance Use Disorder](#)

March 13: [Regulatory and Quality Office Hours](#)

March 13: Spiritual Caregiver Chat - [Can You Help Me? Exploring the Spiritual Needs of Caregivers](#)

March 14: Webinar - Quality & Regulatory Miniseries: [Quality and Regulatory Deep Dive: Why and How the Experience of Care Impacts End-of-Life Care Delivery](#)

March 14: Project ECHO Dementia Care Miniseries: [Best Practices and Beyond](#)

March 18: End-of-Life Doula Chat: [Ask a Doula: An Interview](#)

March 19: Quality Assessment/Performance Improvement Chat: [Effective QAPI Meetings](#)

March 20: Physician/Advanced Practice Provider Chat: [Advance Care Medical Planning: Why Isn't This Done and What We Can Do](#)

March 20: Volunteer Management Chat: [The ABCs and 123s of Volunteer Program Compliance: From the Pages of the Medicare CoPs](#)

March 21: We Honor Veterans [Office Hours](#)

March 21: Project ECHO Dementia Care Miniseries: [Best Practices and Beyond](#)

REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

Change Healthcare Cyberattack Disrupting Healthcare Operations

In February, Change Healthcare experienced a cyberattack that disrupted several of its network and system operations. "Change Healthcare can confirm we experienced a cybersecurity issue perpetrated by a cybercrime threat actor who has represented itself to us as ALPHV/Blackcat," Change Healthcare said in a statement on its [website](#). "Once we became aware of the outside threat, and in the interest of protecting our partners and patients, we took immediate action to disconnect Change Healthcare's systems to prevent further impact; this action was taken so our customers and partners do not need to disconnect." In response to this attack and its adverse impact on our nation's healthcare system, on March 5, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a [statement](#) providing instructions to providers impacted by this incident.

CMS Clarifies Services Under the Medicare Hospice Benefit for Dually Eligible Veterans

CMS recently issued [Change Request 13523](#), which updates the Medicare Benefit Manual to clarify that a Veteran beneficiary who elects hospice services under the Medicare benefit may still receive services that are not included in the hospice plan of care and are furnished and paid under the beneficiary's VA benefits, in addition to hospice services.

Reminder: Hospice Aggregate Cap Self-Reporting Deadline February 29

The deadline to self-report your hospice aggregate cap was February 29. CMS requires hospices to report this information to determine the impact of the aggregate cap on Medicare reimbursement. Hospice providers that do not report this information will receive notice from their Medicare Administrative Contractor and be subject to suspended payments.

AHRQ Requesting Topic Suggestions

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is requesting topics for future evidence reports. Evidence reports are reviews of relevant scientific research to provide information to

consumers, clinicians, and policymakers. These reports are provided at no cost and can help improve the understanding of programs, inequities, and issues. Topics can be submitted on the [AHRQ website](#).

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

IMPACT Act Cap Adjustment in Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, to partially fund the government through FY24. This legislation will pass the Senate and be signed into law by President Biden on Friday.

Included in the bill is a one-year extension from FY32 to FY33 of an IMPACT Act of 2014 provision, which sets the hospice aggregate cap adjustment calculation to the annual payment rate increase. This provision reduces Medicare payments to hospices by \$927M for that year.

NHPCO previously sent [a letter](#) to Congressional leadership in January urging them to reject efforts to use the Medicare Hospice Benefit as an offset in the FY24 funding bills without addressing hospice issues. Unfortunately, these calls were ignored, and this provision be used as an offset for non-hospice legislative priorities.

QUALITY

Project ECHO Dementia Care Miniseries Update

The 2024 NHPCO Project ECHO series kicked off today, Thursday, March 7, with the first miniseries of the year, *Best Practices in Dementia Care*.

This miniseries, hosted in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association, 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. Sessions will focus on the implementation of evidence-based dementia care, specifically in serious illness and at the end of life.

The miniseries is free for all NHPCO members and will be hosted through NHPCO's Zoom account instead of the iECHO portal. [Register today!](#)

Upcoming Sessions

Held each Thursday, 3-4 p.m. ET, from March 7 through April 18

1. March 7: Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia in Hospice and Palliative Care
2. March 14: Person-Centered Patient Assessment and Care Planning
3. March 21: Providing Information, Education, and Support to Patients and Families
4. March 28: Transitions in Care and Coordination of Services
5. April 4: Building and Supporting an Empowered Workforce
6. April 11: Reimbursement, Regulatory, and Quality
7. April 18: Summary and Wrap-Up

Please reach out to projectecho@nhpco.org with any questions.

Regulatory and Quality Office – Upcoming Session

Don't miss out on Regulatory and Quality Office Hours next week! These informal sessions, hosted by members of the Regulatory and Quality & Standards committees, are an opportunity for members to share best practices, ask questions, and network with colleagues nationwide. The next session will be held on Tuesday, March 12 at 12:30 p.m. ET. Register on the [Regulatory and Quality Office Hours page](#) and submit questions in advance to regulatory@nhpco.org or quality@nhpco.org.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

2024 NHPCO Annual Leadership Conference – Call for Proposals Now Open

The Call for Proposals for the 2024 NHPCO Annual Leadership Conference (ALC2024) is now open! Conference topics fall into one of the following categories: Advancing the Care Continuum, Developing Organizational Leaders, and Organizational Performance Improvement. The Conference Planning Committee is seeking interactive content that highlights lessons learned, innovative topics, and tangible solutions providers can apply to their organizations. Proposals are due by April 26, 11:59 p.m. ET, with notification of acceptance in June. [Review the guidelines and submit your proposal.](#)

Still have questions? NHPCO's Education Team will be holding an optional Call for Proposals Office Hours on Wednesday, April 12, at 1 p.m. ET via Zoom. [Register for office hours](#) and utilize this opportunity to ask questions or pose concerns regarding the submission process.

Managing Conflict in the Workplace - March 18 – April 15

Conflict is part of human nature; each of us brings unique values, goals, beliefs, ideas, and needs to our work. In this Level II module, participants will learn about the nature and styles of conflict, the skills needed to address conflict, and effective strategies for managing it. [The course is now open for registration.](#)

More to come in 2024:

- [The Interdisciplinary Team: Key Skills for Hospice Managers:](#) May 6 – June 3
- [MDP Foundational Course:](#) May 20 – July 1

About MDP: The Hospice Manager Development Program 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.

MEMBER UPDATES

NHPCO's Membership Orientation Call

Connect, learn, and maximize your NHPCO member benefits. Join us on the second Friday of each month from 2-3 p.m. ET! [Register for the March 8 Orientation Call.](#)

New HPM Talk Podcast Episode: ACHPN Review – The Conclusion

Join Dr. Steven Baumrucker, Medical Director, Ballad Health Palliative Medicine Associates, as he speaks with Amanda Stevens, Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Educator, Ballad Health Systems Palliative Medicine, and Carissa Depew, Palliative and Hospice Nurse Practitioner, Ballad Health Hospice for the last episode in the ongoing series on the ACHPN exam. [Listen to the newest episode here.](#) Subscribe to Physician and Advanced Practice Provider Community HPM Talk in the podcast player of your choice.

Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice Awards 2024 Nomination Period Opening Soon!

The [Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice Awards](#) recognize hospice volunteers who best reflect the universal concept of volunteerism in its truest sense – serving as an inspiration to others. Recipients of these awards have demonstrated commitment of time and responsibility, have made a notable impact by significantly strengthening a hospice program or the lives of patients/families served, and have undergone substantial personal growth as hospice volunteers. The 2024 nomination period opens on Wednesday, March 20; more information will be provided as it is available on the page linked above.

PALLIATIVE AND ADVANCED CARE

Palliative Care Office Hours – Tomorrow, March 8 at 12 p.m. ET

The VBI Hospice Component is going away. What might that mean for palliative care? What questions do you have about this change? We may not have all the answers, but we are sure many of your colleagues have similar questions. Let's get together to talk about them, or anything else that is on your mind! While [registration is required](#), having an "official question" is not. All NHPCO members are welcome. We hope you will join us.

Predictive Tool for Palliative Care

Canadian researchers examined data for community-dwelling citizens and found that only fifteen percent received any palliative care before death. The researchers used a tool called RESPECT, which helps identify frail older adults' need for palliative care. [This tool](#) can help facilitate conversations with older adults as they approach the end of life.

Fast Fact #479: Communicating About Death by Neurologic Criteria

Death by neurologic criteria (DNC) is the complete and permanent loss of all functions of the entire brain and brainstem due to catastrophic brain injury. It is also referred to as "brain death," although that term is not preferred. DNC is determined through systematic evaluation of specific criteria (see Fast Fact #115). Legally, patients are determined to be dead either due to DNC or irreversible cessation of cardiopulmonary function. Given the lack of high-quality evidence, this [Fast Fact](#) assimilates expert opinion to address the unique communication needs surrounding DNC. Check out the [full library of PCNOW's helpful facts](#).

WE HONOR VETERANS

WHV Level 5 Improvements Forum

Join the We Honor Veterans Team for a forum on our upcoming Level 5 improvements! These updates include a new cohort system for submitting completed Level 5 reports and updated materials to assist you in completing Level 5 activities. The forum will begin with an overview of Level 5 updates and activities, followed by a period for questions and answers.

- [Thursday, March 14, 12-1 p.m. ET](#)
- [Wednesday, March 20, 3:30-4:30 p.m. ET](#)

Stay updated on events hosted by our WHV partners via the [Events Calendar!](#)

NATIONAL HOSPICE FOUNDATION

Scholarship Applications for IDC2024 Open Through March

In anticipation of the 2024 NHPCO Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference (IDC2024), the National Hospice Foundation continues to offer [a scholarship opportunity available to NHPCO members](#). Applications will be accepted through Friday, March 29. All applications will be reviewed in early April and applicants will be notified of decisions at that time. Please see our website for more information on [eligibility/selection criteria](#) and [apply today](#).

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

CMS Health Equity Conference

CMS will host its annual [CMS Health Equity Conference](#) on May 29-30. The free conference will be held at Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland for in-person participation and streamed virtually for online participation.

NIMHD Health Disparities Research Institute

[The Health Disparities Research Institute](#) hosted by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities features lectures on minority health and health disparities research, small group discussions, mock grant review, and seminars. Program participants will have the opportunity to meet with NIH scientific staff engaged in related health disparities research across the various NIH Institutes and Centers. If interested, the application deadline is March 14, 5 p.m. ET.

Clinical Framework for Dismantling Antiracism in the Clinic Room

The journal article "[Clinical Framework for Dismantling Antiracism in the Clinic Room](#)" aims to equip clinicians with the knowledge and skills to address anti-Black racism in healthcare. It describes the historical and social factors influencing experiences of racism and provides practical strategies for integrating anti-racist practices into clinical care. By fostering open and informed dialogue about race, this article promotes trust-building between providers and patients, ultimately contributing to improved health outcomes.

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:

- [Can You Help Me? Exploring the Spiritual Needs of Caregivers](#) - Join the MyNHPCO Spiritual Caregiver Community chat on Wednesday, March 13, 3-4 p.m. ET to discuss how spiritual caregivers can provide support, resources, encouragement, and appropriate interventions to caregivers with loved ones at the end of life.
- [Ask A Doula: Am Interview](#) - Don't forget to register for the MyNHPCO End-of-Life Doula Community chat on Monday, March 18, 3-4 p.m. ET. Attendees will hear from practicing end-of-life doulas about the support they provide at various stages of life, their collaboration with hospices, and their role in an interdisciplinary team. To ensure this presentation is tailored to the needs of NHPCO members, we invite you to submit questions when you register in Zoom.
- [Effective QAPI Meetings](#) - You're invited to the MyNHPCO QAPI Community Chat on Tuesday, March 19, 3-4 p.m. ET for a discussion on how hospices can hold efficient, meaningful QAPI meetings that incorporate the multidisciplinary team.
- [Advance Care Medical Planning: Why Isn't This Done and What We Can Do](#) - Register for the MyNHPCO Physician/Advanced Practice Provider Community chat scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 1-2 p.m. ET. Hospice and palliative care physicians understand the importance of advance care planning, but what about the rest of the medical community? What about public perception? Why aren't all aspects of this employed routinely? Dan Morhaim, M.D., will tackle these questions, and he welcomes your participation in a discussion of how we can do better.
- [The ABCs and 123s of Volunteer Program Compliance: From the Pages of the Medicare CoPs](#) - Join the MyNHPCO Volunteer Management Community chat on Wednesday, March 20, 3-4 p.m. ET. This chat is designed to help you understand the regulations beyond the five-percent requirement. You will learn how to get "survey ready" and what a surveyor might ask of you. Being prepared is key!

Chat Recordings Now Available

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

- **CEO/Executive Director Chat Recording**– [VBID/MA](#)
- **Bereavement Professional Chat Recording** – [Grief in Dementia](#)

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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