



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

## TOP STORIES

### New! CaringInfo Blog, *Insights*, Now Live

CaringInfo.org is a program of NHPCO that provides free resources to educate and empower patients and caregivers to make decisions about serious illness and end-of-life care and services. New to CaringInfo is the CaringInfo blog, *Insights* from CaringInfo, offering timely and practical content from a variety of perspectives in both English and Spanish. *Insights'* monthly posts will expand your access to information, help you learn from others' experiences and best practices, and improve your ability to make informed decisions about your and your patients' care before a crisis.



In honor of National Healthcare Decisions Day on April 16, *Insights* launched with three posts on advance care planning and the forms completed throughout the process.

- Making Your Healthcare Wishes and Medical Choices Known
- Advance Directive vs. Living Will: Which Do You Need?
- Types of Documents to Make Healthcare Wishes Known: Advance Directives, Living Wills, PoAs, DNRs, and POLSTs

[Check out the first posts now](#) and stay tuned for more to come.

### 2024 NHPCO Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference | On-Demand Sessions Available until June 15

We can't believe live events for the [2024 NHPCO Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference \(IDC2024\)](#) are over! The NHPCO team would like to extend a warm 'thank you' to all who joined the live, online sessions and to our conference supporters – Axxess, OnePoint Patient Care, and Hospice News. IDC2024 was a powerful few days of learning and community.

While live events are over, attendees still have access to all on-demand content in the conference portal through June 15. If you missed live events but are interested in viewing the educational sessions and earning over 20 CE/CME credits, there is still time to register and gain access to the on-demand library. Reach out to [conferences@nhpc.org](mailto:conferences@nhpc.org) with any questions.

### CMS Issues New Hospice Claims Edits for Physician Enrollment Requirements

Beginning May 1, 2024, physicians must be enrolled in or validly opted out of Medicare to certify a patient's terminal illness under the Medicare hospice benefit. On April 17, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [Change Request \(CR\) 13531](#), which implements additional edits on hospice claims for hospice certifying physician Medicare enrollment requirements with an implementation date of October 7, 2024. The CR implements additional

edits to verify the enrollment status of the attending physician and referring physician fields on the hospice claim. NHPCO continues to engage with CMS on enrollment challenges pursuant to this requirement. If your organization has experienced challenges with physician enrollment, please reach out to [regulatory@nhpco.org](mailto:regulatory@nhpco.org).

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 23:** Finance/Information Systems Community Chat – [To Outsource, or Not to Outsource...and What to Do Once You Decide](#)

**April 24:** Social Work Community Chat – [The Art of Documentation: What is Necessary and What Is Too Much When Telling a Patient's Story](#)

**April 24:** Clinical and Operations Management Community Chat – [Improving CAHPS Survey Scores](#)

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

**April 25:** Webinar – [FY 2025 Hospice Wage Index and Quality Reporting Requirements Proposed Rule](#)

**May 1:** Bereavement Professional Community Chat – [Grief: Risk Assessing and Care Planning](#)

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## REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

### NHPCO Proposed FY 2025 Medicare State/County Rate Chart Now Available

On March 28, CMS released the [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2025 Hospice Wage Index and Payment Rate Update](#) proposed rule, which includes a 2.6% rate increase and a hospice cap amount of \$34,364.85. In response to this rule, NHPCO has updated its [Proposed FY 2025 Medicare State/County Rate Charts](#). We made strategic macro enhancements to the rate charts to enhance usability, ensuring our members can easily access specific information tailored to state and county levels. This improvement is part of our ongoing commitment to improve the experience of our members and provide timely, accurate data to support your needs. Please reach out to [regulatory@nhpco.org](mailto:regulatory@nhpco.org) with any questions.

### CMS Releases Medicare Advantage, Medicare Part D, and PACE Final Rule

On April 4, CMS released the [Medicare Advantage and the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Program for Contract Year \(CY\) 2024 and Remaining Provisions and Contract Year 2025 Policy and Technical Changes](#) final rule, which includes updates to Medicare Advantage, the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, and Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), and finalizes remaining provisions of the [CY 2024 Medicare Advantage and Part D](#) proposed rule. See the CMS fact sheet [here](#). NHPCO previously [commented](#) on the CY 2024 proposed rule, focusing on palliative care and health equity, among other topics. Please reach out to [regulatory@nhpco.org](mailto:regulatory@nhpco.org) with any questions.

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## QUALITY

### Quality Connections

**First Quarter Achievement:** Congratulations to the 34 member organizations that closed rings in Quality Connections (QC) in the third quarter, including 22 organizations that closed all four rings and completed the program! The [Quality Connections Achievement Map](#) was updated on April 15, reflecting all activities completed through March 31.

**QC Foundations:** Members that are new to Quality Connections are encouraged to complete QC Foundations, designed to introduce participants to the structure of the program and provide a sample of the type of content they'll find throughout.

**QC Evaluation Surveys:** QC participants are asked to complete the Pre- and Post-Assessment surveys located on their dashboard landing page. These evaluations provide important information in planning future Quality Connections offerings.

**About QC:** QC 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](mailto:qualityconnections@nhpco.org) to learn more.

### Updated Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP) Resources

An updated *Timeliness Compliance Threshold for HIS Submissions: Fact Sheet* has been posted to the [HQRP Requirements and Best Practices](#) page. This document is designed to assist providers in successfully meeting the HQRP requirements, understanding the compliance threshold, and monitoring their hospice's timely compliance using the **Hospice Timeliness Compliance Threshold Report**. CMS updated the current Hospice Item Set (HIS) Manual to incorporate a change in the expiration date for the manual and both the Admission and Discharge Item sets. Adjustments were made to the footers, examples, and tables to reflect more current dates along with minor corrections. The updated Manual can be downloaded from the [HQRP: Hospice Item Set](#) webpage.

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## LEGAL AFFAIRS

### Congress Urges CMS to Stop Hospice Fraud

A bipartisan sign-on letter circulates Congress, urging CMS to take immediate action to stamp out fraud within the hospice benefit. This letter is a response to repeated requests for action from Congress to CMS. In 2023, despite a statewide moratorium on new hospices in California, CMS certified an additional 15 hospices in a two-story building in LA that already houses over 100 certified hospices. Flagrant abuse of vulnerable patients and our healthcare system must be stopped. [Take action today](#) and ask your Members of Congress to sign in support of this letter.

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## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

### 2024 Updated CE/CME Opportunities

NHPCO experts and advisors have reviewed and revamped many [online learning](#) offerings, including signature programs and online enduring materials. Explore the [full catalog](#) to learn more or check out the courses below on the latest hospice regulations and standards:

- [Hospice Quality Certificate Program \(HQCP\)](#): This program reviews the federal hospice regulations, compliance as the foundation of a quality hospice program, and the connection between compliance and quality outcomes.
- [Hospice Compliance Certificate Program \(HCCP\)](#): This program covers the basics of healthcare compliance, including developing a compliance program, compliance risk assessment, compliance policies and procedures, and anonymous reporting.
- [Hospice Conditions of Participation](#): This module reviews hospice levels of care and presents application scenarios for participants. The module discusses the provision of hospice care in nursing facilities, a regulatory "hot spot" for providers today.

If you've completed HQCP or HCCP, check out the recently updated [companion courses](#). To enroll in NHPCO's courses, visit the [Online Catalog](#).

### New Online Course Available - *Integrative Therapies in Hospice and Palliative Care Program*

NHPCO's online learning courses cover a variety of topics in a self-paced environment. The new *Integrative Therapies in Hospice and Palliative Care Program* is a nine-part program for multidisciplinary professionals on integrative approaches in hospice and palliative care. The course covers the evolution of the concept of integrative care, explains how integrative therapies share a holistic and multidimensional approach with palliative care, and examines "evidence" in making informed decisions about the use of integrative therapies. [Sign up now](#) or explore the full [online course catalog](#) to see a variety of topics in a self-paced environment.

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## MEMBER UPDATES

### Honor Your Star Volunteers Before National Volunteers Week!

There are less than two weeks left to nominate your star volunteers for the [Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice Awards](#). What better time to honor and nominate volunteers than on National Volunteer Week, April 21 – 27? Visit [Volunteers Are the Foundation of Hospice Awards](#) to get started.

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## WE HONOR VETERANS

### Recording Available - Partner Networking Call Spring 2024

Did you miss the WHV Spring 2024 Partner Networking Call? Review a recording of this call in the [WHV Resource Library](#). The first Partner Networking Call of 2024 included an overview of burial and survivor benefits from the VA's Jennifer Jessup, information about [Dreams for Veterans](#), and stories and photos from Residential Hospice's Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event.

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

### Request for Information (RFI) on Potential Hospice Quality Reporting Program Social Determinants of Health

On April 4, CMS published the [FY 2025 Hospice Wage Index and Payment Rate Update](#). With the proposed rule, CMS asks for feedback on different topics as they develop the final rule for FY 2025 and future payment policies. These requests are an opportunity to provide CMS with "on-the-ground" experiences in providing care to Medicare beneficiaries. NHPCO requests information from providers regarding the RFI on Potential Hospice Quality Reporting Program Social Determinants of Health Items included in the proposed rule. **[Please complete the survey by May 10.](#)** If you have questions, email [quality@nhpco.org](mailto:quality@nhpco.org).

### Impact Wellbeing™ Guide: Taking Action to Improve Healthcare Worker Wellbeing

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation published the [Impact Wellbeing Guide](#) to help hospital leaders and executives accelerate or supplement professional wellbeing work in their hospitals at the operational level. The guide includes six, evidence-informed actions that aim to improve the professional wellbeing of all healthcare workers, no matter title or department, and strengthen hospital operations.

### Community-Level Innovations for Improving Health Outcomes Funding Opportunity

The Community Level Innovations for Improving Health Outcomes [grant](#) from the HHS Office of Minority Health is for community-level innovations that demonstrate reducing barriers related to social determinants of health can increase the use of preventive health services and make progress toward leading health indicator targets. If interested, the deadline to apply is May 15.

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## 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:

- **[To Outsource, or Not to Outsource...and What to Do Once You Decide](#)** - You're invited to the MyNHPCO Finance/Information Systems Community for the upcoming chat on Tuesday, April 23, 2-3 p.m. ET. Presenters will explore the various factors that can lead to outsourcing services, delve into the intricacies of selecting a vendor for outsourcing, and learn about effective methods to monitor and evaluate their performance.

- [The Art of Documentation: What is Necessary and What Is Too Much When Telling a Patient's Story](#) - Register for the MyNHPCO Social Work Community chat on Wednesday, April 24, 1-2 p.m. ET. Panelists will discuss key components to include when documenting patient and family stories, considerations when documenting sensitive patient information such as domestic violence, financial exploitation, and suicidal ideation, and considerations on the impact of patient and family access to patient records and social work documentation.
- [Improving CAHPS Survey Scores](#) - Join the MyNHPCO Clinical and Operations Management Committee on Wednesday, April 24, 3-4 p.m. ET, for a robust discussion and open forum regarding CAHPS, HGRP, and Care Compare. Discover the various surveys and comparisons that intersect with payment. Uncover strategies to boost your scores and sidestep compliance pitfalls.
- [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group](#) - Don't forget to register for the MyNHPCO Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group on Thursday, April 25, at 3:30 p.m. ET to join a group focused on spiritual care leadership and mentoring. This group provides a safe space for receiving guidance, enhancing professional performance and development, providing mentoring and leadership direction, and supporting all clinicians who provide spiritual care in an interdisciplinary setting.
- [Grief: Risk Assessing and Care Planning](#) - Don't miss the MyNHPCO Bereavement Professional Community chat on Wednesday, May 1, 2-3 p.m. ET. Low, medium, and high bereavement risks are phrases spoken during every interdisciplinary team meeting and can be determined through the bereavement risk assessment. During this chat, presenters will discuss the risk assessment and care planning process as a guide for all levels of bereavement staff.

#### 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** - [Assessing and Working with Spiritual Needs in Hospice Music Therapy](#)
- **Development/PR/Marketing Chat Recording** - [CMS Survey Changes and How to Navigate Them](#)
- **Spiritual Caregiver Chat Recording** - [Exploring the Four Domains of Spiritual Health & Wellbeing](#)

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.

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