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## TOP STORY

### **2024 NHPCO Annual Leadership Conference Registration Now Open**

Registration for the [2024 NHPCO Annual Leadership Conference](#) (ALC2024) is now live! ALC2024 is the premier conference for leaders and aspiring leaders working to advance the field of hospice and palliative care. An annual staple in the field, ALC2024 is an essential opportunity for your organization and leadership to make connections and take home best practices from high-quality, innovative providers nationwide.



Looking for interdisciplinary team-focused education? Registration for the [2024 NHPCO Virtual Interdisciplinary Conference](#) (IDC2024) is also open. 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 before February 8 to maximize your savings with the IDC2024 Early Bird and ALC2024 Super Saver rates, including added savings for group registrations. Email [conferences@nhpc.org](mailto:conferences@nhpc.org) with any questions.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 8:** [Membership Orientation Call](#)

**December 12:** [Quality Office Hours](#)

**December 12:** Chat – [End-of-Life Doulas and the Hospice Team](#)

**December 13:** [We Honor Veterans Partner Networking Call](#)

**December 14:** [Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group](#)

**December 20:** Chat - [Volunteer Management Open Discussion](#)

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## REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

### **New Approved Recovery Audit Contractor Topic on Hospice Care Extended Length of Stay**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently approved a new proposed Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) topic, entitled '[5A316- Hospice Care- Extended Length of Stay: Medical Necessity and Documentation Requirements](#).' This review will evaluate billed hospice care with extended lengths of stay for medical reasonableness and necessity. Under the RAC topic,

impacted revenue codes include 0651-Routine Home Care, 0652-Continuous Home Care, and 0655-Inpatient Respite Care.

### **CMS To Hold Second Annual Health Equity Conference in May 2024**

CMS will be holding its second annual Health Equity Conference May 29-30, 2024. Conference attendance is free and events will be held in the Hyatt Regency hotel in Bethesda, Maryland, with a virtual option for remote attendees. CMS' call for proposals will open in January 2024 and registration will be available beginning Spring 2024. More details will be made available soon on [CMS' webpage](#).

### **PEPPER Report Outage**

The Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report (PEPPER) provides Medicare data statistics relating to discharges and services vulnerable to improper payments for providers. These reports traditionally can be accessed on a PEPPER resources [webpage](#). However, the webpage administrators have reported an outage, with no alternative method to obtain this data. NHPCO has reached out to CMS and is working to get an update on when these resources will be available.

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## **LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS**

### **NHPCO Collecting Signatures for Rural Letter to Congress – Deadline Extended**

NHPCO is collecting organizational signatures from rural and frontier providers for a letter to Congress. This letter is intended to highlight the challenges rural and frontier providers are facing and to begin partnership with Congress on these issues. [Review the letter and sign on](#) by **Friday, December 15**. If you are interested in getting more involved with rural provider issues, volunteer to be a member of the rural community steering committee. NHPCO welcomes all disciplines as well as individuals who have not participated in leadership roles with the organization previously. Email Alix Ware at [aware@nhpco.org](mailto:aware@nhpco.org) with a short introduction to get started.

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## **QUALITY**

### **Quality Office Hours – Upcoming Session**

Don't miss out on this monthly quality discussion! These informal sessions, hosted by the NHPCO Quality Team, are an opportunity for members to share best practices, ask questions, and discuss quality topics with colleagues nationwide. The next Quality Office Hours session will be held on December 12 at 1 p.m. ET. Register on the [Quality Office Hours page](#) and submit questions in advance to [quality@nhpco.org](mailto:quality@nhpco.org).

### **HQRP Updates**

**Provider Preview Reports:** Members are encouraged to access their CASPER folders prior to December 15 to download February 2024 Provider Preview Reports. The preview period lasts from November 15, 2023 to December 15, 2023, 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.

**CAHPS Size Exemptions:** CAHPS Size Exemptions for hospices that served fewer than 50 survey-eligible decedents in 2023 are due no later than December 31, 2023. For more information, visit the [CMS HQRP: CAHPS Survey](#) webpage.

**Demographic Corrections:** Members seeking demographic corrections on Care Compare are encouraged to review the [How to Update Hospice Demographic Data](#) webpage as well as the [HQRP Quarterly Q&A for Q2 2023](#) for more information. Please reach out to [quality@nhpco.org](mailto:quality@nhpco.org) if your organization has requested demographic corrections via the updated process.

## Public Comment is Now Open for Fall 2023 Measures

[The Partnership for Quality Management \(PQM\)](#) is soliciting public comments for each Endorsement & Maintenance (E&M) project. This is an opportunity for providers to submit comments on specific measures related to their practice. There are four Advanced Illness and Post-Acute Care measures available for public comments during this cycle, three of which relate to pain intensity and plan of care in medical and radiation oncology. Members are also encouraged to send their comments to [quality@nhpco.org](mailto:quality@nhpco.org) to be incorporated into NHPCO's comment submission.

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## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

### NHPCO December Webinar

Don't miss the upcoming NHPCO webinar for December, *Holiday Grief to Gratitude*. Although well meaning, we often do and say things that are not helpful to those who are vulnerable and feeling isolated in their cocoon of holiday grief. This is a season of joy, celebration, and family togetherness, but for some, the painful reminders of what is no longer can dampen holiday spirits. [Join this webinar](#) on Thursday, December 14 at 2 p.m. ET to learn tools for navigating grief this holiday season.

### 2024 Hospice Manager Development Program Schedule

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. This dynamic training and development program provides access to national hospice experts and peers in hospice management. Level I and II courses are [now open for registration](#). Visit the Hospice MDP [Upcoming Courses schedule](#) for more information, rates, and registration.

More to come in 2024:

- [Hospice MDP Foundational Course](#): January 29 – March 11
  - [Managing the Changing Organization](#): February 12 – March 11
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## PALLIATIVE & ADVANCED CARE

### Last Office Hours Session of 2023: December 8 at 12 p.m. ET

What went well with your palliative program this year? What exciting changes are you anticipating for your program in 2024? NHPCO would love to wrap up the year and talk about what may be coming in 2024 with you. As always, bring questions, comments, or ideas with your curious mindset to our diverse faculty and peer group ready to chat with you. All NHPCO members are welcome. Registration is required but preparing an "official question" is not! [Sign up today](#).

### JPM: Top Ten Tips Palliative Care Clinicians Should Know about Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, immune-mediated, neurodegenerative condition of the central nervous system, with distinct challenges due to its heterogeneous presentation, prognostic uncertainty, and variable clinical course of neurological and non-neurological symptoms and disability. Although there have been significant advances in management of MS, many patients experience disability progression. Despite MS being a frequent cause of neurological disability, particularly in young persons, involvement of palliative care physicians in the care of patients with MS has been limited. The November 2023 issue of the *Journal of Palliative Medicine* provides ten tips for palliative clinicians for caring for patients with MS and their care partners. [Access the article and its tips](#).

### **Fast Fact #460: Cognitive Based Pain Self-Management Strategies**

Although pain experiences vary widely, all patients with pain must manage its impact on their lives and emotions. We don't often hear about pain self-management skills, although they have been described in published literature as an adjuvant way (often in conjunction with analgesics) to help patients understand and even modify the emotional components of living with pain. Many of these skills are based in cognitive behavioral therapy; [this Fast Fact](#) reviews cognitive-based pain self-management strategies for patients with serious illness that have supporting evidence and can be employed by clinicians. Check out the [full library of PCNOW's helpful facts](#).

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## **WE HONOR VETERANS**

### **We Honor Veterans Partner Networking Call**

Join us for the final 2023 WHV Partner Networking Call on December 13 from 3-4 p.m. ET. Attendees will be updated on the most recent news from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, and WHV partners. We look forward to welcoming Jessica Benson of Mynd Immersive Virtual Reality and Dr. Qwynn Galloway-Salazar, Army Veteran, end-of-life doula, and founder of In Their Honor, LLC, to provide exciting insight into how the work they are doing is relevant to WHV partners. [Register here!](#)

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## **MEMBER UPDATES**

### **New NHPCO Updater Blog Post from Interim CEO, Ben Marcantonio**

Check out the latest post on the NHPCO Updater blog, [The Carters Are Showing Us What Hospice Means](#), from NHPCO's Interim CEO, Ben Marcantonio. Read the excerpt below and [access the full post](#).

"Last week, we saw with our own eyes that hospice care can help patients achieve their most important goals even when their time to do so is limited..[It] took incredible personal strength and fortitude, as well as the support of his family, for Jimmy Carter to travel and take part in these celebrations of his wife's incredible life. It also took hospice care, with a team of hospice workers working with and supporting the family to help the patient – who happens to be a former President of the United States – meet his goals for the time he has left. That is exactly what hospices do, and I could not be more grateful to the Carters for showing it to their fellow Americans in real time."

### **NHPCO 2024 Membership Renewal**

Thank you for being a member of NHPCO and an active participant in the hospice and palliative care community. We hope NHPCO has been a useful resource for you and a strong advocate on your behalf throughout 2023. The membership renewal process is underway. You should have received a physical mailing from NHPCO with your membership renewal packet, or you can renew online by visiting [nhpc.org/renew](http://nhpc.org/renew). If you have any questions, please contact [solutions@nhpc.org](mailto:solutions@nhpc.org).

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## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION**

### **Project ECHO: Equity Where It Matters**

**Evaluation and Knowledge Check:** If you attended the December 7 session, "The Unique Needs of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Hospice and Palliative Care," please visit our [Project ECHO](#) page to complete the evaluation. If you are participating in the NHPCO Health Equity certificate program, please also complete the Knowledge Check attached to the evaluation as well. Reach out to [innovation@nhpc.org](mailto:innovation@nhpc.org) with any questions.

**Upcoming Session:** Equity and access to care in hospice and palliative care can be reflected in different ways, shapes, and forms. Providers, patients, caregivers, and the community alike are responsible and need to be engaged in creating a healthcare landscape where inclusivity is intentional, trust and transparency are at the forefront of care delivery, and patients, as well as providers, navigate their respective roles in a psychologically safe context. [Join us](#) on Thursday, December 14 at 3 p.m. ET for **"Equity Where It Matters: A Summary of Health Equity in Hospice and Palliative Care,"** as we focus on integration of the diversity, equity, inclusion, and access concepts that have been discussed throughout the year and bring together both a vision and actionable tools that result in a care system providing high quality, value based, and optimally utilized delivery of serious-illness and end-of-life care.

**About Project ECHO:** Project ECHO creates virtual communities of learners by bringing together healthcare providers, subject matter experts, and the wider community using case-based learning and an "all teach, all learn" approach. The 2023 series, *Equity Where It Matters*, addresses diversity and cultural competence in healthcare.

### **Rise to Health Coalition**

The [Rise to Health Coalition's](#) Healthcare Organizations Learning Network will be a community of up to 50 teams from across the nation that comes together in a year-long learning experience to acquire the tools, build and practice the skills, and obtain a greater understanding of equity and racial justice. A [recent survey](#) commissioned by the Rise to Health Coalition found more than 82 percent of respondents from the healthcare industry said that health equity was very or somewhat significant in our health care system today, but less than half said that they were confident in the current healthcare system's ability to effectively address health equity. This Learning Network is an effort to make progress on health equity issues by making healthcare better for all. Teams looking to apply should be comprised of three to five people from your organization who are ready to improve health equity, advance racial justice, and commit to dismantling institutional and systemic racism. There is no fee to participate. If you are interested, please complete this [application](#) by December 18, 2023.

### **Social Determinants of Health in Nursing Research**

This grant from the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) seeks to help develop educational activities preparing nurse scientists to conduct research on the social determinants of health. If interested, the deadline to apply is January 12, 2024.

### **The Bill Finerfrock Health Policy Fellowship**

This fellowship from the [National Association of Rural Health Clinics](#) provides mid-career professionals with experience ranging from billing, coding, office management, and/or clinical care in rural health clinics or systems. The Bill Finerfrock Health Policy Fellow will participate in advocacy meetings, educate policymakers on rural health, learn how to be a grassroots advocate and champion for rural health. If interested, the deadline to submit your application is January 5, 2024 by 11:59 p.m. ET.

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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:

- **End-of-Life Doulas and the Hospice Team** - You're invited to the inaugural MyNHPCO [End-of-Life Doula \(EOLD\) Community chat](#) on Tuesday, December 12 at 1 p.m. ET where participants will gain a greater understanding of the EOLD role, their scope of practice, and how they may complement the hospice interdisciplinary team. There will also be information on how to integrate this role, in various ways, into your hospice's model of care.

- **Spiritual Caregiver Community Peer-Led Support Group** - Don't forget to register for the MyNHPCO Spiritual Caregiver Community peer-led support group on [Thursday, December 14 at 3:30 p.m. ET](#) for a peer-led support group with a focus on spiritual care leadership and mentoring. Mentors will offer a safe space for guidance, to enhance professional performance and development, provide mentoring and leadership direction, and support all clinicians who provide spiritual care in an interdisciplinary setting.
- **Volunteer Management Open Discussion** - [Join the MyNHPCO Volunteer Management Community](#) on December 20 at 3 p.m. ET for an open discussion where folks are invited to share their current challenges, accomplishments, and what they are doing for their volunteers as the year closes out, including their favorite holiday traditions.

### **Chat Recordings Now Available**

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

- **The Data-Driven Hospice** – [MyNHPCO Finance/Information Systems Community Chat](#)
- **Palliative Rehab: An Oxymoron or Best Practice? A Panel Discussion** – [MyNHPCO Integrative & Rehabilitation Therapies Community Chat](#)
- **Grief Support & The Holidays** – [MyNHPCO Bereavement Community Chat](#)

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.