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***This week's NewsBriefs edition is the last of 2023. We will resume regularly scheduled publications on Thursday, January 4, 2024. NHPCO's office will be closed Friday, December 22 through Monday, January 1 and will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.***

***Thank you for being a part of NHPCO and the broader serious-illness care community. On behalf of the NHPCO team, we wish you a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season.***

## TOP STORIES

### **2023 NHPCO Facts and Figures Report Now Available**

The 2023 Facts and Figures report is now available on the [NHPCO website](#). Facts and Figures is an essential annual report on key data points related to the delivery of hospice care, including information on patient characteristics, location and level of care, Medicare hospice spending, and hospice providers. This year's findings reflect patients who received care through 2021 provided by hospices certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and reimbursed under the Medicare Hospice Benefit. [Read the full press release.](#)



### **CMS Clarifies Timeline for Special Focus Program Implementation**

In the calendar year (CY) 2024 home health final rule, CMS indicated that the total number of hospices selected for the Special Focus Program (SFP) would be determined in the first quarter of each calendar year. However, on a November Hospice Forum Call, CMS indicated that while the effective date of the SFP is January 1, 2024, selection of hospices for the SFP is not expected to likely begin until late 2024. NHPCO reached out to CMS in response to clarify this timing. CMS has confirmed with NHPCO that the agency plans to begin selection of the first SFP participants in November 2024. To run the algorithm for this selection, CMS will use November 2024 Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP) refresh data, and survey data from May 1, 2021 through April 30, 2024. For more information, reach out to [regulatory@nhpco.org](mailto:regulatory@nhpco.org).

### **What's New with NHPCO's 2024 Education?**

NHPCO is a leading provider of flexible, affordable, high-quality education for hospice and palliative care professionals. Check out these new and updated 2024 educational offerings: [Webinars](#) – The 2024 Webinar Series will consist of multiple miniseries offerings that individuals and organizations can purchase independently, focused on specific topics. Webinars offer great value at only \$35 per webinar with unlimited organizational logins to live sessions, continuing education credits, and on-demand access for six months.

[Hospice Manager Development Program](#) - Hospice MDP is the only comprehensive training program that provides hospice-specific information and helps managers develop the skills they need to succeed. Hospice MDP enables participants to earn their Level I or Level II designation with a combination of instructor-led and self-paced courses. Register now for the next [MDP Foundational Course, Level I](#), starting January 29, 2024. Members receive a special rate and further discounts are available for group registrations.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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## REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE

### **NHPCO to Meet with CMS Regarding Hospice Audit System Challenges**

NHPCO has a meeting scheduled in January 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 will include NHPCO staff leadership and representatives from member hospices. The discussion will be informed by both a recent survey of hospices and conversations with NHPCO members. If you would like to provide additional input before the meeting, please reach out by January 11, 2024 to Patrick Harrison at [pharrison@nhpco.org](mailto:pharrison@nhpco.org).

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## LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

### **Final Call for Signatures – Rural Letter to Congress**

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, join the [rural MyNHPCO community](#).

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## MODELS & DEMOS

### **Applications Due for Making Care Primary Model**

The Make Care Primary (MCP) model builds on previous CMMI models to test care coordination, care integration, and community connection between primary care providers and specialty providers. The model will be tested in eight states: Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Washington. To participate in the model, an organization must, among other requirements, provide primary care to Medicare beneficiaries and be located in the eight states listed above. [Applications](#) should only take 15 minutes and are due by 11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday, December 14.

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## QUALITY

### **Quality Office Hours – December Session Recap**

Have you joined a Quality Office Hours session recently? During the December session, members discussed regulatory updates, sentinel events, and best practices in wound care. These informal monthly sessions hosted by the NHPCO Quality Team are an opportunity for members to share best practices, ask questions, and discuss an array of quality topics with colleagues nationwide. Beginning in January, the Quality and Regulatory teams will offer combined Office Hours each month. Register for the 2024 series on the [Quality and Regulatory Office Hours page](#) and submit questions in advance to [quality@nhpco.org](mailto:quality@nhpco.org).

## AHRQ CAHPS Survey Webinar

The Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ) will be hosting a webcast, [Improving Response Rates and Representativeness for CAHPS Survey Data: An Overview of Web-First and Other Strategies](#), on January 11 at 1 p.m. ET. NHPCO members are encouraged to register to learn about strategies for improving survey response rates, ways to increase participation in CAHPS surveys, and current experiments to test web-first administration modes for Medicare CAHPS and Hospice CAHPS.

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## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

### ALC2023 Ending Soon – Thank You 2023 Supporters!

On-demand access to the 2023 NHPCO Annual Leadership Conference (ALC2023) is ending soon on December 31! If you attended the conference or registered for the on-demand content, be sure to log back into the conference platform to view or review any sessions. If you don't have access, it's not too late to [register](#) and earn continuing education credits before the year is over. As online access comes to a close, we'd like to thank our generous conference supporters who helped make ALC2023 possible:

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## MEMBER UPDATES

### Next Generation Leadership Council Tools to Support Your Recruitment Efforts

Need to hire but haven't posted the job description yet? NHPCO's [Next Generation Leadership Council](#) took a deep dive this year into seven clinical job profiles in an effort to combat the staffing shortages and help hospices recruit talent. [Download](#) the full job profiles for Hospice Administrative Support Volunteer, Spiritual Care Counselor/Chaplain, Social Worker, CNA/Hospice Aide, LVN/LPN, RN, and Hospice Patient Support Volunteer and use them as a resource to compare with your current job descriptions when hiring.

### 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 [nhpco.org/renew](http://nhpco.org/renew). If you have any questions, please contact [solutions@nhpco.org](mailto:solutions@nhpco.org).

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## WE HONOR VETERANS

### We Honor Veterans Partner Portal Closure for Maintenance – Reopening January 8

The We Honor Veterans Partner Portal is currently closed for maintenance. The portal will reopen on January 8 at 8 a.m. During this time, partner sign-ups and report submissions will be unavailable. All partners with Level 5 reports due in December will receive an extension through January 31. This necessary closure for maintenance will enable the portal's optimal functioning

and ensure that partners and the public have access to the most up to date information available. We apologize for this inconvenience and thank you for your patience during this time. Please reach out to [veterans@nhpco.org](mailto:veterans@nhpco.org) with any questions

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

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

Thank you all for your support and participation in our 2023 *Equity Where It Matters* Series! **Evaluation and Knowledge Check:** If you attended the December 14 session, "Equity Where It Matters: A Summary of Health Equity 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@nhpco.org](mailto:innovation@nhpco.org) with any questions.

**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.

### **Funding Opportunity: Dementia Care and Caregiver Support Intervention Research**

This [grant from the NIH](#) supports research to help address the needs and promote the health, function, and well-being of persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. If interested, the deadline to apply is February 13, 2024.

### **Resource: A Conceptual Map of Structural Racism in Healthcare**

Longstanding racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare experiences contribute to unequal health and life outcomes. In this [brief from the Urban Institute](#), a conceptual map of structural racism in healthcare demonstrates the connections between mental models that guide how society thinks and acts, unequal laws and policies that determine access to resources, and racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare experiences and outcomes.

### **Resource: No Surprises Act Toolkit for Consumer Advocates**

The No Surprises Act helps protect consumers from surprise medical bills by prohibiting balance billing and limiting consumer cost sharing in certain circumstances. CMS created the [Toolkit for Consumer Advocates](#) so advocates can understand the provisions of the No Surprises Act, recognize relevant documentation, find additional assistance for consumers, and more.

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## NHPCO PODCAST

### **New NHPCO Podcast Episode!**

The latest episode of the NHPCO Podcast, "CMS' Special Focus Program, What We Know," is out now! NHPCO's VP of Policy and Government Relations, Logan Hoover and Patrick Harrison, Senior Director of Regulatory and Compliance, discuss one of the most pressing issues facing the hospice community in 2024: the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Special Focus Program (SFP). [Listen to Episode 7.](#)

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## MyNHPCO COMMUNITIES

### **Upcoming Chat 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](#):

- **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:

- **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.