

What is Quality Connections?

Quality Connections (QC) is a national program designed to support hospice and palliative care provider delivery of high quality, person-centered care. The program enhances the knowledge base, skills, and competency of hospice and palliative care staff through education, tools, resources, and opportunities for engagement and interaction among hospice and palliative care quality professionals. The goal of QC is to help programs achieve and sustain continuous quality improvement.

Why should my organization participate?

1. It's about the care you provide to those who need it. Your ability to measure, interpret, and respond strategically to what's happening in your organization will help you flourish in an increasingly competitive market and prove your organization's value to potential partners in the community. As the healthcare continuum moves toward a pay-for-performance model, the ability to meet and exceed quality measure requirements will contribute to your organization's sustainability.
2. QC is a benefit of your NHPCO membership, which can save you money on external performance improvement products and services and provide data and resource access that cannot be obtained elsewhere.
3. You will receive national recognition from NHPCO for your QC participation, demonstrating your commitment to continuous quality improvement. Partners, payers, and consumers are looking for value and commitment; QC participation can provide the edge you need in a competitive market.

How is the program structured?

The QC program contains four pillars: education, application, measurement, and innovation. Each pillar contains activities that contribute to continuous quality improvement. An organization must complete a minimum of four activities within a pillar during the year to achieve national recognition for their commitment to continuous quality improvement.

How much does it cost to participate in QC?

The QC program is a benefit of NHPCO membership. All NHPCO member organizations can participate at no additional cost.

How do we get started?

It's easy! Follow the steps in the Quality Connections User Guide to enroll in the program and start your quality improvement journey.

New users are encouraged to complete the Foundations activity group first. Foundations is a collection of four activities, one from each QC pillar, designed to introduce you to the structure of the program and provide a sample of the type of content you'll find throughout the program. Completion of activities in Foundations will count toward your progress in each pillar!

Who can be a QC participant?

QC is a provider member program which means that your organization is the participant. A staff member from your organization completes the requirements in the QC program with assistance from appropriate staff within the organization.

What is expected of a QC participant?

Quality Connections participants are encouraged to achieve milestones within defined timeframes by participating in education, application, performance measurement, and innovation activities that promote performance improvement, high-quality care delivery, and service excellence.

Is there a deadline for completion of QC activities?

Yes, the QC program is based on a program year; see below for 2024 program year due dates. Participants are encouraged to pace themselves throughout the year to achieve their milestones in each pillar.



How are organizations recognized for their participation in QC?

Participating organizations will obtain a certificate annually after completion of all requirements. Participants will also be highlighted in NHPCO publications.

Who checks off activity requirements in the QC program?

We recommend assigning a primary point of contact for the QC program portal. Your point of contact should be someone who knows your QAPI program well; they will be responsible for completing your QC activities.

Does the primary contact need to know anything about DART ID to participate in the QC program?

It is useful for your primary point of contact to have access to your DART ID when interacting with components of this program. If you do not have your organization's DART ID, please reach out to solutions@nhpco.org

Does it matter what email address we use to login to Quality Connections?

Yes. The email address used to login to the QC portal should not be associated with an individual NHPCO membership and must be a monitored inbox or forward to a monitored inbox. This is the email that the QC team will use to communicate with you about the Quality Connections program. Please work with your IT team to ensure that messages delivered to your QC address from qualityconnections@nhpco.org are white-listed and not blocked as spam or junk.

Will the data I submit to NHPCO be protected?

Yes, NHPCO has contracted with a Patient Safety Organization, the Center for Patient Safety, to ensure that your organization's data is confidential and protected. We will ask your organization to sign a confidentiality agreement and you will be required to engage in a short webinar with NHPCO's PSO.

Is Project ECHO a separate program from QC?

Yes. Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is an innovative tele-mentoring program designed to engage participants in bi-directional learning through case studies and feedback from experts and peers. To learn more about NHPCO's Project ECHO, please visit: www.nhpco.org/projectecho.

What is the Quality and Innovation Network?

The Quality and Innovation Network (QIN) represents a community of providers who share a commitment to establishing a culture of quality within their organizations. By facilitating collaboration across organizations nationwide, the QIN supports sharing evidence-based best practices and innovative solutions to the common challenges that many hospice and palliative providers face. In addition, QIN participants will earn Quality Connections credit. For more information, please visit [Quality and Innovation Network | NHPCO](#).

What is the Hospice Quality Certificate Program (HQCP)?

Designed to provide the education needed to thrive in today's complex healthcare landscape, this program covers the basics of healthcare compliance, including a review of the federal hospice regulations, compliance as the foundation of a quality hospice program, and the connection between compliance and quality outcomes. In addition, topics include the nuts and bolts of hospice quality measurement, self-assessment, continuous performance improvement, the federal hospice and quality reporting program, and best practices to apply to your hospice program to ensure high quality patient and family care. This is a certificate-based program and not a certification, and Quality Connections credit is available for participation.

A member of our team completed the Hospice Quality Certificate Program last year. Will we also receive credit this year, and does credit apply to multiple locations?

Completion of the Hospice Quality Certificate Program (HQCP) counts once per individual and does not apply to subsequent program years. One individual HQCP completion only counts for multiple locations within an organization is that individual is responsible for quality initiatives across each site.



What survey and benchmarking resources are available in QC?

Measures of Excellence (MOE): The MOE is a quarterly data collection tool and dashboard that organizations may use to track operational and clinical data to inform high quality care. The quarterly MOE Dashboard allows organizations to compare themselves to others for benchmarking and the MOE National Report provides data that supports a comprehensive review of national participant performance. The MOE Dashboard and National Report are exclusive NHPCO member benefits.

Survey of Team Attitudes and Relationships (STAR): STAR is the first staff job satisfaction survey specific to the hospice and palliative care field. Assessment of staff job satisfaction provides important feedback that leaders can use to make changes in organizational culture that can improve staff morale, turnover, and even quality of patient care. The National STAR Report provides members with benchmarking data on workforce trends that allows them to compare their organizational staff satisfaction measures with nationwide performance data.

Evaluation of Grief Support Services (EGSS): The EGSS survey is a members-only resource designed to evaluate an organization's grief support services

NHPCO is pleased to partner with Qualtrics to provide these tools as a member benefit.

Why aren't some of my organization's completed activities showing in our QC portal?

Certain activities require manual credit application by the QC team. Credit for these activities will be applied prior to each quarterly achievement map update and may not be reflected in your organization's Quality Connections portal until the end of the program quarter.

My organization closed all four rings before the end of the year. Will we be provided with QC marketing materials at the time of program completion?

Yes! Beginning in 2024, organizations will receive marketing materials and ring completion emblems at the end of each program quarter. NHPCO recognizes organizational Ring Achievement throughout the year during conferences and via multiple Communications platforms, such as social media.

My organization has several locations. Does each location need to independently complete QC activities, or can we receive credit for each location for activities completed at the corporate level?

Quality Connections activities are designed to engage the entire Interdisciplinary Team. While NHPCO recognizes that some organizations follow a corporate QAPI structure, each site or location must complete activities in Quality Connections independently in order to receive credit.

Activities may be administered/organized at the corporate level but should be completed by staff at the location level to ensure that program goals for enhancing the knowledge base and skills of hospice and palliative care staff are met.

QC Ring Achievement will be based on the activities of each location. Locations within a multisite organization may have different Ring Achievement levels at the end of the program year, and each location will be provided with the appropriate marketing materials corresponding to their achievement.

I've reviewed the User Guide and FAQs, but I have additional questions. Does NHPCO offer individualized support?

Absolutely. Members should reach out to qualityconnections@nhpc.org with any questions. The NHPCO team is happy to schedule a detailed walkthrough of the portal, address specific questions, or provide general support as needed.



Quality Connections 2024 Program Year Key Dates

	Program Year 2023 Dates	Activity Completion Due Date	QC Achievement Map Update
Quarter 1	Feb 16 – Mar 31, 2024	Mar 31, 2024	April 15, 2024
Quarter 2	Apr 1 – June 30, 2024	June 30, 2024	July 15, 2024
Quarter 3	Jul 1 – Sep 30, 2024	Sep 30, 2024	October 14, 2024
Quarter 4	Oct 1, 2024 – Jan 31, 2025	Jan 31, 2025	Feb 17, 2025

Additional questions can be submitted to QualityConnections@nhpco.org

