



# Quality Connections

## User Guide

January 2024

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## User Guide



### Introduction

Consistently delivering quality care requires hospice and palliative care providers to practice and perform above the regulatory requirements and truly individualize their care and services to meet the needs and expectations of each patient and their family. This provider is always asking, "What can we do better?" to make the hospice or palliative care experience the best it can be for a patient and their loved ones.

With hospice quality of care recently under the federal magnifying glass and in the national media, providers must continually strive to provide the best quality care for every patient and family they serve. Hospice and community-based palliative care providers can demonstrate this commitment to quality through participating in the NHPCO Quality Connections program.



### About Quality Connections

Quality Connections is a national program designed to support hospice and palliative care provider delivery of high-quality, person-centered care. The program goals are to enhance 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.

Quality Connections is a program included in your NHPCO provider membership. If your organization already has an

established quality improvement program, Quality Connections can build on and effectively take advantage of what you already have in place. For those seeking to enrich existing efforts, Quality Connections is just what you need.

Participants in the Quality Connections program are tasked with achieving milestones within defined timeframes, in areas that include education and competence, application of education, performance measurement, and innovation that promotes high quality care delivery.

These areas - Education, Application, Measurement, and Innovation - comprise the four pillars of activities that an organization will work to complete. Progress is tracked by closing rings of activities within the pillars. Each pillar includes specific activities incorporating practical resources to progressively track and improve both clinical and organizational quality. Many of the activities integrated within each of the four pillars may already be a part of your existing quality improvement program.

### The Value of Quality Connections

Integrating quality improvement into all aspects of your work is key to your sustainability, as partners, payers and consumers are looking for value and commitment. Quality Connections helps you get there by:

- Providing the education, resources, and benchmarking tools for you to meet and exceed quality measure requirements.
- Saving you money on external performance improvement products and services.
- Giving you national recognition from NHPCO as a Quality Connections participant, demonstrating your commitment to high quality care.

This user guide will help you get started and walk you through the program in more detail. You can also find quick answers to common questions in the [Quality Connections FAQ](#) found on our website.

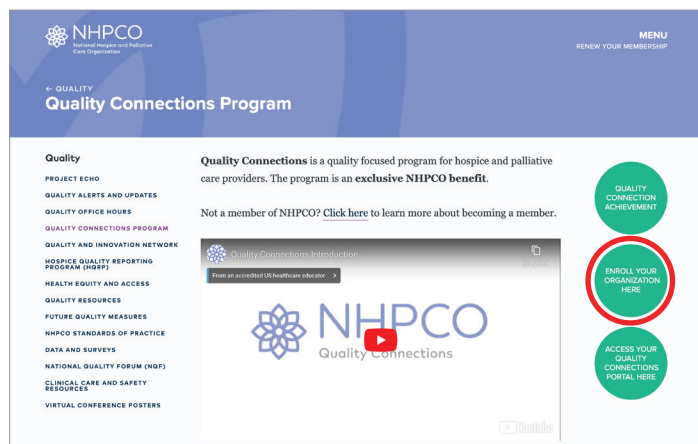


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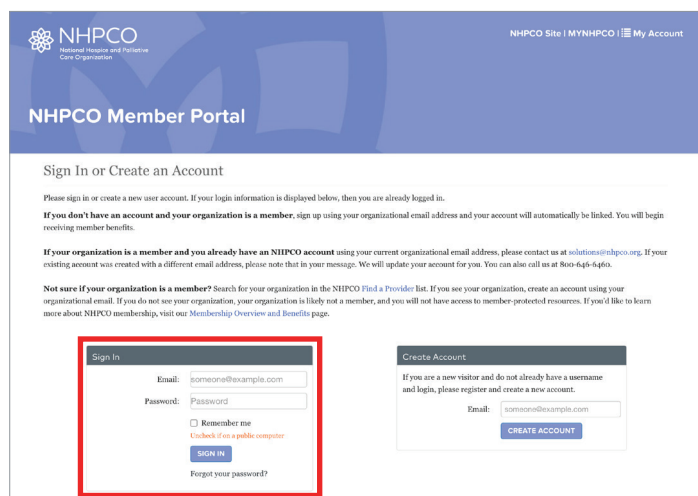


## How to Enroll

1. Navigate to [NHPCO Quality Connections Program](#) and click the green button “Enroll your organization here”



2. You will now be redirected to the NHPCO Member portal. Login to your NHPCO Member portal using your individual organizational email.



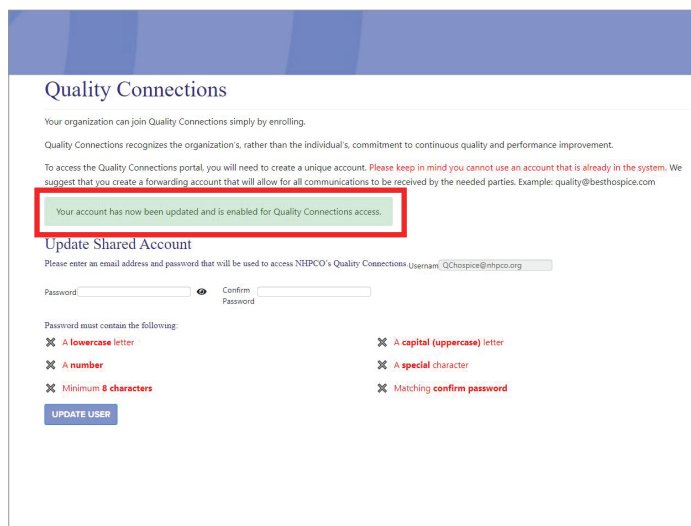
3. Once logged in, you will see the Quality Connections account information page with instructions to open a new Quality Connections account. Enter the following details and click “create user”:

- A. **Username** – Unique email address (i.e., Quality@abchospice.com)\*
- B. **Password** – must follow stated parameters listed below the “confirm password” field. Each parameter will turn green showing that the parameter has been met during password creation.

- C. **Confirm Password** – reenter the password to confirm

*\*Quality Connections is an organizational, not an individual, program. 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@nhpc.org](mailto:qualityconnections@nhpc.org) are white-listed and not blocked as spam or junk.*

4. You will receive a green notification on screen when your organization's account has been successfully created. Welcome to the program!



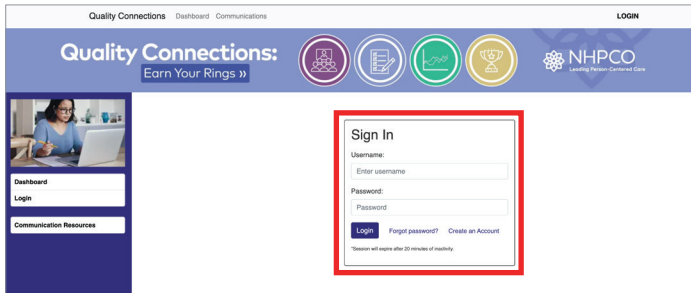
## Getting Started

5. The Quality Connections email address will receive an email confirmation indicating that the account has been set up for access and will provide a link to the QC portal.

**We suggest setting up an auto-forward so that messages received to your Quality Connections email account are distributed to the appropriate parties in your organization. All communication regarding your Quality Connections account will be sent to this email and will not be sent to individual email addresses.**



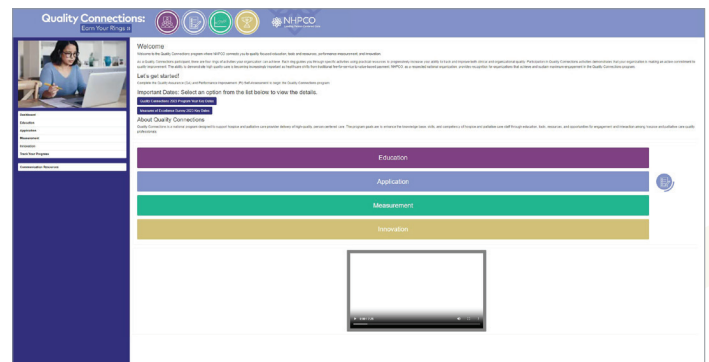
6. Login to your Quality Connections portal by visiting:  
[Quality Connections Login](#)



activities throughout the year.

## Pillar Activities

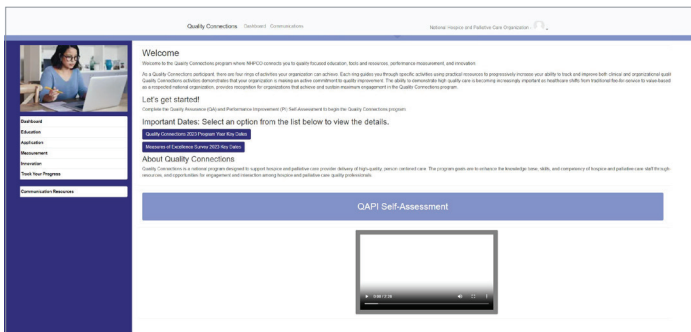
After completing the Pre-Assessment, you can access all of the Quality Connections pillars and activities. In order to close a ring, you must complete four activities within the associated pillar. Please note that some of the activities contain multiple video modules that must be completed to earn credit for that activity.



## Pre- and Post-Assessments

Please complete the Pre-Assessment prior to beginning any Quality Connections activities. This short survey will allow the NHPCO team to learn more about your organization's baseline knowledge and abilities.

Following completion of the program, or at the end of the program year, please complete the Post-Assessment to provide important information about your experiences in Quality Connections.

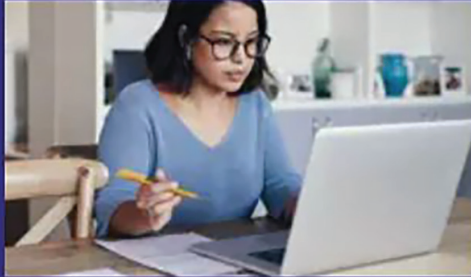


## Foundations

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!



## Navigating the QC Portal



Dashboard

Education

Application

Measurement

Innovation

Track Your Progress

Communication Resources

## Track Your Progress

Track your progress on your Quality Connections journey using the **Track Your Progress** feature located in the left-hand menu. This report allows you to view your ongoing activities and ring status. You can also view progress from prior years by selecting from the drop-down menu on the progress report.

## Communication Resources

Celebrate your team's dedication and commitment to quality improvement by communicating your organization's Quality Connections achievements within your community. On the **Communications Resources** page you will find marketing materials such as achievement emblems, press release templates, and social media toolkits. Please note that organizations should only use the emblems applicable for their level of achievement in the program.

## Program Year Key Dates

The Quality Connections program runs on a program year which typically opens and closes each February. Achievement is measured throughout the year, with quarterly program downtime to allow for updates and achievement notifications. Although participants are encouraged to work toward closing all four rings in a program year, all levels of achievement are celebrated during these quarterly updates.

Your organization can join Quality Connections at any time, and there is no requirement to wait until the beginning of a program year. Key Dates specific to each program year can be found on the Dashboard page of the QC portal.

# Quality Connections

## Pillars



### Education



Continuous quality assessment and performance improvement (QAPI) is a requirement in the hospice Medicare Conditions of Participation. Understanding these concepts and how to

apply them within the provision of hospice care requires continuous shared learning. The Education pillar of Quality Connections provides participants with the education they need to understand and improve their QAPI plan and performance to a high level.

Completing four different activities within the Education pillar will allow you to earn a ring. Activities in the Education pillar include content focused on improving hospice and palliative care delivery, diversity and inclusion initiatives, hospice regulatory topics, and much more.

### Application



The Application pillar activities are the practical application of QAPI. Participants use the Application Pillar tools to implement plans and processes to improve hospice care.

Activities in the Application pillar include accreditation status, care of veterans, and content focused on survey and audit preparation.

### Measurement



The Measurement pillar activities support comprehensive data collection, analysis, and reporting and allow access to measurement and data for performance improvement. A

flagship activity within the Measurement pillar includes the **Measures of Excellence (MOE) Survey**, which is a quarterly data collection tool and dashboard that tracks operational and clinical data to inform high quality care. The

measurement pillar also includes the **Survey of Team Attitudes and Relationships (STAR)**, **Evaluation of Grief Support Services (EGSS)** and **Equity and Inclusion Needs Assessment**.

For more information on these survey instruments, please visit [Data and Surveys | NHPCO](#)

**Data Protection:** NHPCO has contracted with a Patient Safety Organization (PSO), the Center for Patient Safety (CPS), to support and monitor the data collection, storage, and reporting of our members' clinical safety data. You can participate with confidence that your aggregate data remains anonymous and is protected from any misuse. The CPS PSO also offers educational opportunities and supports our members' efforts to prevent future adverse events.

### Innovation



The Innovation pillar includes activities that encourage participants to share knowledge and expertise. Participating in the Innovation pillar contributes to shared learning to

promote and sustain continuous quality and performance improvement in the broader hospice community. Activities in the Innovation pillar focus on innovative strategies related to workforce engagement, health information, and advocacy in the field.





**We are here to assist you with your Quality Connections journey. Learn more about the program by exploring the following resources:**

## ➤ **Quality Connections Open Forum**

Is your organization new to Quality Connections, or are you interested in learning more about the program content? Join us to learn more about Quality Connections during our quarterly Quality Connections Open Forum. To register, visit [NHPCO Quality Connections Program](https://nhpco.org/qualityconnectionsprogram) or contact [qualityconnections@nhpco.org](mailto:qualityconnections@nhpco.org).

## ➤ **Quality Connections Outreach**

Members should reach out to [qualityconnections@nhpco.org](mailto:qualityconnections@nhpco.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 Resources:**

### ➤ [NHPCO Quality Connections webpage](#)

- Includes resources such as:
  - | Frequently Asked Questions
  - | Open Forum recordings
  - | QC Walkthrough Webinar recording
  - | QC Achievement Map

### ➤ [Quality Connections Overview Flyer](#)