



## Chair Message

*Mary Sheehan, IL-HPCO Chair  
CEO Joliet Area Community Hospice*

Happy Holidays from the Board of Directors! Thank you for your membership and your support. The Board and I are excited about our work in 2018. Our goals this year are focused on providing value to our members.

- Our 2017 annual conference was a great success and the education committee is already working on 2018.
- The relationships with our elected officials are key and our Advocacy Day in Springfield is scheduled for February 28th.
- It will also be important to continue our outreach to the entire state of Illinois. So far we have meetings scheduled in Peoria and Marion Illinois.
- Last year we formed our alliance with POLST and NHPCO and we continue to assess other relationship opportunities. We will continue our relationship with Illinois Health and Hospital Association.
- Last but not least, Pam Cramer (our Executive Director) and I did some road trips to a couple of hospice programs and potential hospice programs last year and we intend to continue that this year. Please let Pam or I know if you are interested in hosting us.

## REIMBURSEMENT AUDIO CONFERENCES

We have many questions about Reimbursement. Our Legislative Committee and Reimbursement Task Force meets with HFS regularly and continues to learn. As a membership benefit we will begin holding Reimbursement Breakfast Calls. This Audio

Conference will be held quarterly, beginning in March. Members are invited to participate to listen to the latest challenges and opportunities.

These calls take place at 8:30-9:30

CT in the morning, a time designed to start your day, and not interrupt it. All you need to participate is a phone or speaker phone! These learning calls are free only to members. Dates listed below.



## Attend

### 2018 Save the Dates

- Feb 28, Wednesday**, IL-HPCO Advocacy Day, Springfield
- May 16, Wednesday**, IL-HPCO Regional Meeting, Peoria
- August 29, Wednesday**, IL-HPCO Regional Meeting, Marion
- October 10-11**, Annual Conference, Northern Illinois University, Naperville
- March 14**, Reimbursement Audio Conference
- May 9**, Reimbursement Audio Conference
- August 22**, Reimbursement Audio Conference
- December 4**, Reimbursement Audio Conference

## In this Issue

- Chair Message
- Scheduling Reimbursement Breakfast
- 2018 Events

- Hospice Compare Refresh
- Legislative Update
- Payment Questions for MCOs

- Website Update
- Palmetto GBA Probe
- Heritage Healthcare
- Mergers and Acquisitions

## Legislative Update — Betsy D. Mitchell, IL-HPCO Legislative Consultant



In November, the Illinois General Assembly concluded its six-day Fall Veto Session. For the past several years, Veto Sessions have become more of an extension of the Spring Session rather than just focused on the Governor's veto messages. This past session

was no different.

Clearly, the main focus during this Fall Veto Session was on the sexual harassment allegations circling the Capitol. In Illinois, this all began after a female lobbyist presented testimony at a hearing against Senator Ira Silverstein (D, Chicago). This issue along with other complaints are now before the newly appointed Legislative Inspector General, Julie Porter. In addition, Senate Bill 402 was passed to require all legislators, legislative staff, lobbyists, and lobbying entities to complete annual training. This bill has been signed into law by Governor. In addition, both the Senate and House members attended seminars on their last day in Springfield.

Another interesting aspect of this Veto Session was on the vetoed bills. This year, the Governor sent 50 veto messages to the Illinois General Assembly and the legislature overrode 14 of the veto messages. Historically, this is a very high number of vetomessages to be overridden.

The biggest fight was over the Governor's veto of Senate Bill 1905 which would have prohibited local units of governments from adopting their own ordinances to become right to work zones. The Senate overrode the Governor's veto with 42 yes and 13 no votes (36 votes were

required to override). In the House the override failed by one vote with 66 Democrats and 4 Republicans voting for the bill.

Committee hearings have been taking place throughout December. Three hearings were on focused on the Managed Care Organizations and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. Both chambers are expected to return to Springfield for full session in the latter part of January 2018, unless called back by their leader. The House returns into regular session on Tuesday, January 23 and the Senate returns on Tuesday, January 30. The Governor's Budget address is scheduled for Wednesday, February 14, 2018.

When the legislature returns, possible issues that could be considered include physician assisted suicide, more changes to reduce opioid abuse, tweaking the MCO reimbursement process, scope of practice issues, and several others. Never hesitate to contact me if you hear about the possibility of an issue popping up in which IL-HPCO should be debating.

### Website Updates [www.il-hpco.org](http://www.il-hpco.org)

Please note that there are enhancements to the website.....All members are listed in the Membership area, which we will link to the Locator page.

<https://il-hpco.org/membership/provider-members/Referrals>.



**We will publish an  
internal 2018 Calendar  
in the  
Member Restricted area.**



## Hospice Compare Refresh: What Changed – And What Hasn't

*Kate Proctor, JD, Senior Vice President, Chief Counsel-Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care*

On December 12, 2017, CMS's Hospice Compare website was refreshed to reflect more recent quality data reported by hospices. Originally launched in August 2017, the Hospice Compare website was developed by CMS to report and compare quality metrics reported by hospices to help terminally ill patients find and compare hospices in their area. Quality metrics include patient care issues such as whether a patient's values and beliefs were addressed at admission and whether the patient received timely and thorough assessments for pain and shortness of breath. The December 2017 update includes data collected by hospices from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

Unfortunately, the errors plaguing the website since its release have not been corrected. As soon as it was released, hospices began noticing that their demographic data was incorrect, including their addresses, phone numbers, and ownership information. Hospice service areas were also incorrect, such that hospices who served a particular zip code were not appearing in searches for that zip code, but hospices not licensed in that zip code would appear.

Hospices raised these concerns to CMS, but that information has yet to be corrected. To attempt to address this issue, CMS put up a banner on the Hospice Compare website in late November warning consumers that when they search "by location, the list of agencies may or may not serve the zip code, city, or state" they searched. It recommends the consumer call the hospice to confirm that they serve that area.

The next Hospice Compare refresh is scheduled for February 2018, though CMS has not indicated that the errors in hospice demographic information will be corrected at that time. The February 2018 refresh will revise the quality scores to include data from April 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016.

In the meantime, there are several things hospices should do to prepare for the February 2018 refresh and to ensure their demographic information is accurate when CMS corrects the website:

- Ensure you reported any demographic information (e.g., phone number, address) errors to your state's ASPEN coordinator. A list of ASPEN coordinators can be found at: <https://data.medicare.gov/Hospice-Compare/Hospice-CASPER-ASPEN-Contacts/qx7x-wipa>.
- Use the Hospice Compare website to search the zip codes your hospice serves. If your hospice does not appear in locations you serve, or if hospices who do not serve your area appear, report these issues to your state ASPEN coordinator.
- Review your preview report from December 1, 2017 to ensure the quality score appears to be correct. If they are not, be sure to request a review of the data before the 30-day review period ends. Information on how to request a review can be found at: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Hospice-Quality-Reporting/Hospice-Quality-Public-Reporting.html>.

(cont. p.4)

## Payment Questions for MCOs-Working Closely with HFS

The Legislative Committee and Reimbursement Workgroup, led by Sara Dado and Kellie Newman, have developed a list of questions that have been sent to Robert Mendonsa and Teresa Hersey at the Illinois Department of Health Care and Family Services (HFS). The objective of these questions is to seek clarification of the operational process between hospice and MCOs. IL-HPCO has noted that each member agency, in building relationships with payers, has found that there is confusion and variation. These questions, crafted by the mentioned IL HPCO groups, have been sent to Robert Mendonsa and he has responded that they will get back to IL-HPCO as soon as they clarify 'some internal policies.'

We will continue to aggressively pursue.

We will continue to work on, and discuss with HFS elimination of the "pass-through." Aggressive pursuit will be used with this issue as well. Lastly we are asking that Illinois Medicaid waive the prior authorization requirement for hospice providers admitting patients without prior authorization.

You may have noted in the good news category...that Illinois Medicaid has eliminated the requirement for submitting hospice election notification to Medicaid and the MCOs

## Hospice Compare Refresh: (cont. from p. 3)

- Train staff on the importance of quality measures and how to meet them. For example, does your staff know what CMS considers to be a "comprehensive" pain assessment? For information on the HIS quality scores, see: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Hospice-Quality-Reporting/Current-Measures.html>.

## PALMETTO GBA PROBE & EDUCATE PROCESS

Effective October 1, 2017, Palmetto GBA implemented the Targeted Probe & Educate (TPE) process. This process applies to providers in all states that are serviced by Palmetto GBA. Providers can find more information about the TPE process on Palmetto GBA's and CMS' websites by selecting the links below.

### Palmetto GBA website:

[Targeted Probe and Educate \(TPE\) Process](#)

[Targeted Probe & Educate \(TPE\) Provider Contact](#)

### CMS website:

[Targeted Probe and Educate \(TPE\)](#)

In addition, Palmetto GBA now has a dedicated page for the TPE, which can be accessed at: <https://www.palmettogba.com/palmetto/providers.nsf/docscat/Providers~JM%20Home%20Health%20and%20Hospice~Medical%20Review~Targeted%20Probe%20and%20Educate>



*IL-HPCO wishes all its members a safe and healthy Holiday Season and the best for 2018! We thank you for your support.*

## HOSPICE PREDICTED TO FACE A NEW YEAR OF MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

The past year has seen a surge of mergers and acquisitions for and within home health providers. Big industry players like Amedisys, Brentwood, and Encompass Home Health and Hospice have developed strategies to consolidate their place in the market. This trend is one that Carlo Calma, author of the Home Health Care News article “Home Health Players Line Up for Hospice Deals in 2018” expects to continue well into the new year.

“I don’t know of any [provider] looking to remain exclusively as a home health provider,” says Mark Kulik, managing director of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based health mergers and acquisitions (M&A) advisory firm The Braff Group. “If you’re a provider of Medicare-certified services, traditional episodic home care, I can’t think of anybody of size that’s not trying to also provide hospice services, as well.”

Consumer demand for hospice care is driving the rise of acquisitions, and this may be tied in part to financial considerations. “Demand is high because I think people are seeing that it’s a fraction of the normal cost of the last six months of life,” says Rich Tinsley, CEO and partner at Louisville, Kentucky-based M&A advisory firm Stoneridge Partners.

The economics are enticing for providers as well. Reimbursement rates from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) are stable, even seeing slight increases. When seeking out hospices that

represent a good investment, analysts say that compliance is an important factor.

“Every buyer is looking for a pristine acquisition to make,” says Cory Mertz, managing partner at the Florida-based healthcare M&A firm Mertz Taggart. “As a result of the risks inherent with reimbursement by Medicare and Medicaid, you want to have an agency that has got as a low a risk of any sort of compliance issues, as possible.”

In the coming year, we can expect not only more movement, but also more players. “You’ve got private equity players that are chasing pretty heavy after this space, as well,” Kulik says. “If you’re a strategic player, that’s also another factor you’re contending with.” (Home Health Care News, 12/7, <https://homehealthcarenews.com/2017/12/hospice-ma-on-steady-growth-path-for-2018>)

*From Hospice Home Network (HNN) December 19, 2107*



## New Members

### **IL-HPCO celebrates new member Heritage Healthcare.**

**Heritage Healthcare is located in Harwood Heights and serves residents in Cook, Lake, McHenry, Kane, DeKalb, DuPage, Boone, Will, Grundy and Kendall Counties.  
Executive director is Gretchen Zoeller.**

**Welcome to Heritage Healthcare!**

IL-HPCO News and Events is a publication of the Illinois Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and may not be reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the publisher. Views expressed by various authors are not necessarily those of IL-HPCO. All contributions are made with the understanding that they may be edited for clarity and placement purposes.

Editor: Mary Sheehan, CEO-Joliet Community Hospice, [msheehan@joliethospice.org](mailto:msheehan@joliethospice.org)

Executive Director: Pamela Cramer, CAE, [pcramer@il-hpco.org](mailto:pcramer@il-hpco.org)

Production Editor: Laureen Crotteau, [lcrotteau@joliethospice.org](mailto:lcrotteau@joliethospice.org)

Offices: 902 Ash Street, Suite 200, Winnetka, IL 60093-2436 (847-441-7200) [www.il-hpco.org](http://www.il-hpco.org).