



Letter from Executive Director Sara Dado

Happy Spring! It is hard to believe that it is already April. I don't know about you, but I always welcome this time of year with open arms– birds chirping, longer, warmer days and blossoming flowers. All reminders that another winter is behind us, and new things are growing.

We kicked off 2024 with our annual membership drive and let me tell you– our members came out strong! A nearly 100% renewal rate of our current membership and we added several new hospice providers to our membership. To all of our returning members, **THANK YOU** for continuing to support your state hospice organization. Many of you have been around for a very long time and I am so grateful for your continued support and commitment. To our new members– **WELCOME**. It is only through the support of our growing membership that we can continue to advance our initiatives in education and advocacy.

Throughout the past several months, I have had the opportunity to connect with many of you, either in person, via phone or over email. These conversations have both invigorated and inspired me. I appreciate so many of you sharing openly and candidly your organization's challenges and successes as we continue to fine tune how IL-HPCO can best support all our members. We continue to receive member questions and inquiries via the website at [Contact Us - Illinois Hospice and Palliative Care Organization \(IL-HPCO\)](#). If you have a question, concern, or comment, I encourage you to send me a message via the website or email me directly at sdado@il-

hpc.org.

At the beginning of this year, we selected a theme for our upcoming conference: **Building a Stronger Community: Shaping the Future of Hospice**. I think this theme is the perfect description of where we are headed, from our first regional meeting of the year to our upcoming conference, our multitude of advocacy advancements and our growing membership base. Together, we are building a stronger community and working together to shape the future of hospice across the state of Illinois.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming Annual Meeting and Conference on May 14th in Naperville!

Until then,
Sara

Letter from Chairman Doug Irvin

2024 is off to a strong start for IL-HPCO. We are looking forward to the content and camaraderie of the upcoming Annual Meeting and Educational Conference on May 14 while reflecting on the same from the 2024's first Regional Meeting held in March. We are proud to be working on hosting at least two more Regional Meetings this year. Our desire is to provide more value and depth on the topics that are of most interest to all of you – our committed members of IL-HPCO.

We have welcomed the early-bird renewal of many of our existing members and we are excited to announce that a number of hospices have joined for the first time or rejoined after an absence. Thank you for trusting our guidance and leadership as we continue to support and advocate for all Illinois providers. In addition to new member hospices, we have new interest from individuals in becoming members of the board and members of committees. Your service and volunteerism to strengthening this organization is appreciated.

The committees and work groups are doing amazing and impactful work in the areas of advocacy, legislation, government affairs, education, billing and membership. Look for more detail in the rest of this newsletter and we hope to see you at the upcoming annual meeting and educational

conference where more will be discussed.

Doug Irvin

Education Update from Merilee Smith

We had a great turnout at our first in person regional meeting in recent years. Uplifted Care hosted the luncheon and presentation in their Grief Center in Bourbonnais on Friday, March 22nd. Ellen Byrne, IL-HPCO Director of Policy & Government Affairs, led a discussion on Hospice Regulatory Updates. Nurses and Social workers earned a one-hour CEU for attending.

Participants had the opportunity to visit Uplifted Care's Grief Center. A beautiful site that provides bereavement support for not only patients and families of Uplifted Care, but the community too. A bonus was the gardens adjacent to the center.

We are putting the final touches on the IL-HPCO Annual Meeting and Educational Conference themed, "Building a Stronger Community: Shaping the Future of Hospice." The conference is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14th, an all-day, in-person event, at Northern Illinois University's (NIU), Naperville campus. We have an excellent line up of keynote speakers and breakout sessions. Nurses and Social workers can earn up to 6 CEUs for the day.

If you have not registered yet, please do so as the deadline is May 3rd, 2024. We hope to see you there and cannot wait to connect and continue building this hospice community together.

The Education Committee is working on additional regional meetings throughout the state and virtual webinars later this year. Details to follow soon!

Government Affairs Update from Ellen Byrne

The first quarter of 2024 was a particularly busy time for the IL-HPCO Government Affairs Committee. Many hospice related policy initiatives that have been dormant for months or years have recently sprung to life,

offering IL-HPCO opportunities to improve access and reduce barriers for Illinois hospice providers and families facing a serious illness.

The Illinois General Assembly session is in full swing, with state lawmakers considering several bills that have the potential to impact IL-HPCO members.

- IL-HPCO's top legislative priority is to pass Senate Bill 3714, the Hospice & Palliative Loan Repayment Act sponsored by Lakesia Collins of Chicago. This legislation creates a Community Hospice & Palliative Care Professional Loan Repayment Program which would offer grants to qualifying hospice physicians, nurse practitioners, RNs, LPNs, and social workers to use towards their educational loans.
- We are also collaborating with the Alzheimer's Association of Illinois to advocate for Senate Bill 2644, the Advance Directives Registry Act sponsored by Julie Morrison of Deerfield. This bill creates a repository for advance directives, starting with the Uniform POLST form, at the Secretary of State. The registry will be available to be accessed by health systems and healthcare providers. Individuals or their healthcare providers will be able to upload completed forms, as well as amend or revoke previously submitted forms.
- Finally, we are closely watching Senate Bill 3499, the End-of-Life Options Act which establishes the right of a competent, terminally ill adult to end their life through legal aid in dying/medical aid in dying. Importantly, this bill collects key data about patients who are prescribed lethal medication and tracks which patients die by taking those medications, including how many use hospice services. It also provides protection for the rights of medical providers and their employers to participate or not participate.

In March, IL-HPCO scored a big win by establishing that the IL Nurse Practice Act and implementing regulations do permit a licensed practical nurse (LPN) rather than a registered nurse (RN) to travel to a deceased patient's home or nursing facility and observe, document, and report a lack of vital signs, fixed pupils, and other signs of death. IL-HPCO convened a group of organizations representing hospices, nurses and LTC operators to discuss how to approach the IL Departments of Public Health & Financial & Professional Services to clarify the state's interpretation of rules regarding RN delegation authority and LPN scope of practice when a patient has died in a home- or community-based setting. On March 19, the state affirmed alignment with our understanding of these rules.

Additionally, we are happy to report that the Illinois Department of Health Care and Family Services (HFS) informed us that they have submitted a 1915(i) waiver–state plan amendment (SPA) to CMS, applying for a Pediatric Palliative Care benefit under the Illinois Medicaid program. CMS has 90 days to respond to the state’s application and may negotiate changes before approving the SPA. In the meantime, representatives from IL–HPCO, Lightways Hospice & Serious Illness Care and the HAP Foundation have begun working with HFS staff to prepare for operationalizing the long–sought program which will pay qualified providers for comprehensive pediatric palliative care services and keep seriously ill children at home with their families.

Finally, the Palliative Care Subcommittee of the Illinois State Hospice & Palliative Care Advisory Committee has met regularly over the last several months with discussions facilitated by IL–HPCO Director of Policy & Government Affairs, Ellen Byrne. The goal of this work is to research, evaluate and make recommendations regarding policies the State of Illinois should adopt to ensure that adult community–based palliative care (CBPC) effectively improves the lives of all its adult citizens experiencing a serious illness. Several members and former members of the IL–HPCO Board are participating in the subcommittee which has so far developed updated definitions of “palliative care” and “serious illness” and is now working to establish criteria for the population of patients who can benefit from CBPC.

The IL–HPCO Government Affairs Committee works in close collaboration with Executive Director, Sara Dado to support advocacy for health policies that benefit all Illinois licensed community–based hospices and palliative care programs as well as Illinois citizens impacted by a serious or life–limiting illness. We would love to have you join our advocacy efforts by becoming a member of the Government Affairs Committee or working with us to meet your state and federal policy makers. Please contact Ellen Byrne, Director of Policy & Government Affairs to find out more (ebyrne@il-hpc.org).



POLST Illinois Committee Members The Rev. Julian Bond, Dr. Jacob Varney and Dr. Julie Goldstein supporting SB 2644: SOS Advance Directives Registry in Springfield, IL

Special Announcements

Join us May 14 for the Annual Meeting and Education Conference at NIU – Naperville!

ILLINOIS HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE ORGANIZATION ANNUAL MEETING AND EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Building a Stronger Community:
Shaping the Future of Hospice

*Tuesday, May 14, 2024
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.*

Northern Illinois University – Naperville
1120 E. Diehl Road
Naperville, IL 60563

\$125 for members/\$175 non-members

Register at www.ilhpc.org
Registration deadline is May 3rd



Nursing and social work continuing education credits will be offered.

We look forward to hosting Annual Meeting and Education Conference at NIU–Naperville on May 14. Our dynamic speakers have prepared valuable material to share with you. [View the schedule](#) for the conference which includes keynote presentations from Shelley Henry RN, CPHRM, CHPN on “Bridging the Staffing Gap: Results of the 3rd Annual Hospice Nurse Survey.”



Patrick Harrison from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) will be providing a “Hospice Regulatory and Quality Update.”



[REGISTER](#)

Coming from a long distance? No problem! Use IL-HPCO's [special hotel rate](#) at the Hampton by Holton – Chicago/Naperville.

IL-HPCO Regional Meeting Recap – March 22

On March 22, IL-HPCO welcomes members and non-members for its first in-person regional meeting since the beginning of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Our host and IL-HPCO member provider, Uplifted Care, provided a lovely space at their Community Grief Center in Kankakee, Illinois to gather together as a group. We are proud to share that over 45 individuals from 12 different hospice programs were in attendance! Thank you Uplifted Care for your hospitality!

During the meeting, Director of Policy & Government Affairs, Ellen Byrne, gave an update on state and federal regulatory changes that impact hospice organizations. The goal of her presentation was to ensure that attendees have the information they need to achieve regulatory compliance and operational efficiency. She also provided an update on Illinois' Medical Aid in Dying legislation.



IL-HPCO's presence at the Chicago Health Executive Forum

We believe that hospice and palliative care should always be a part of the conversation when discussing health care. Sara Dado, IL-HPCO's Executive Director, attended the Chicago Health Executives Annual Meeting in February to encourage conversations and educate providers about the value of hospice care. Sara Dado pictured with Dana Crosby from Home Centered Care Institute, who received an innovation award.



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Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition Focused on Hospice and Palliative Care

Sara Dado and Ellen Byrne gave a virtual presentation to the Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition earlier this year sharing information to help caregivers understand the basics of hospice and palliative care in Illinois. They had a great turn out with over 100 participants joining from around the state.

2024 IL-HPCO/WiHPCA Joint Webinar Series continues: May 23



2024 ILHPCO/WIPCA Webinar Series

“Emergency Preparedness for Hospice Providers”

By Connie Polke, Founder and
CEO, Collaborate HealthCare
Urgency Group (CHUG)



May 23, 2024
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. CT



Registration is free for IL-HPCO,
WiPHCA and OCHCH members.
Non-members is \$25

[REGISTER NOW](#)

www.il-hpco.org

We are excited to share that the second installment of our joint webinar series with the Wisconsin Hospice & Palliative Care Association is set for May 23 at Noon CT. Connie Polke, Founder and CEO of Collaborate Health Care Urgency Group (CHUG), will be presenting on “Emergency Preparedness for Hospice Providers.” Registration is free for members. Contact Sara Dado at sdado@il-hpco.org for the code. Non-members is \$25.

[REGISTER](#)



Our mailing address is:
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