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## Letter from Executive Director Sara Dado

As we move into the second half of 2024, I want to thank you for your continued support of IL-HPCO and the work that we are all doing to improve the lives of seriously ill individuals in Illinois and beyond. As I continue my journey around the state, talking with and meeting our provider members, I remain humbled by your dedication and grateful to be a part of this important movement.

I want to share some exciting news! Earlier this year, IL-HPCO was awarded a sizable, multi-year grant from Elea Institute, a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to advancing care for people with serious illness. This grant project, titled Supporting Quality Among Hospice Providers Through Coordinated Clinical Education, will support the continued growth and development of one of IL-HPCO's

key initiatives– providing high quality education to our provider members through a variety of channels, including in person learning, hybrid education and recorded online modules. All of these educational opportunities will be available at no cost to IL–HPCO members and for a fee to non–members. The grant will fund the development of new curriculum, based on member feedback and relevant to current industry trends, allow us to create a hybrid learning platform for increased accessibility and provide the ability for IL–HPCO to house recorded education modules for access by members on the IL–HPCO website. Our first step in this project will be the hiring of an [Education Coordinator](#) to assist in curriculum development, researching and securing a learning platform and supporting myself and the education committee in the planning and execution of the goals outlined in the grant. A job description for this role has been created, shared and is currently posted. Please reach out to me at [sdado@il-hpco.org](mailto:sdado@il-hpco.org) for more information. I will keep you posted as we move forward with this important initiative and wish to again express gratitude to ELEA Institute for supporting IL–HPCO.

The second half of 2024 is shaping up to be just as robust and engaging as the first half. In October, we will welcome Merilee Smith as our new Board President. I am looking forward to working closely with Merilee to continue to build upon the success created under the leadership of Doug Irvin over the past 2 years. As our outgoing Board President, Doug has led with integrity, vision and compassion, setting IL–HPCO on the path to continued growth.

Please plan to join us for our next Regional Meeting, hosted by Northern Illinois Hospice in Rockford on Tuesday August 13<sup>th</sup> from 11:30am–1pm. Registration is now open at [www.il-hpco.org](http://www.il-hpco.org) and is free to all IL–HPCO members. I look forward to seeing you there.

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## Letter from Chairman Doug Irvin

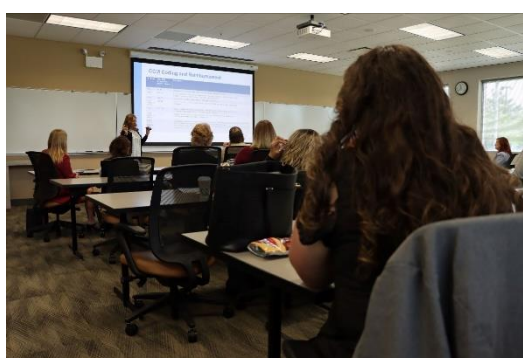
I am happy to report the continued progress and success IL-HPCO continues to have. I encourage you all to read the various updates for a more detailed account of the impact the organizational efforts are having on our collective community of care. Throughout my tenure as chair, we have navigated through challenging times but I'm happy to share that we have come out stronger to improve care for our patients. By partnering with The HAP Foundation, we have a stable, attentive and collaborative Executive Director, Sara Dado. Her dedication to improving hospice care has set IL-HPCO on a strong path forward for growth and increased opportunity. I am proud to share that our membership and revenues have increased, which will lead to continued community of care and support for all of you as our valuable providers.

With that, I am proud to welcome Merilee Smith as the incoming IL-HPCO Chair. She has been a strong and meaningful contributor to the work of hospice and palliative care for over 16 years and has been an active IL-HPCO member for 6 years serving on the Board since 2022. In addition, she has been IL-HPCO's Vice Chair and the chair of the Education Committee playing a critical role in the success of the 2024 Annual Meeting and Education Conference in May. I am glad to welcome her to the Chair position, officially in October, and will be glad to support her in her role as I become the Past Chair for IL-HPCO. Please join me in this welcome, support, and gratitude for her efforts to support us all!

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## Education Update from Merilee Smith

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, IL-HPCO held its first in person conference since 2019 at the Naperville campus of Northern Illinois University. The IL-HPCO Annual Meeting and Educational Conference was themed, “Building a Stronger Community: Shaping the Future of Hospice.” We had over 100 registrants and 9 sponsors/vendors.



The conference opened with Shelly Henry as a keynote speaker, presenting “Bridging the Staffing Gap.” Breakout sessions included a wide range of topics including leadership, quality, best clinical practices, music therapy, chaplaincy, and bereavement.

IL-HPCO had its annual meeting at the conference luncheon.

The closing keynote, “2024 Hospice Regulatory & Quality Update” was presented by Patrick Harrison, NHPCO Senior Director, Regulation and Compliance. Nurses and Social workers earned up to 6 CEUs for the day.

The feedback from attendees was positive. We look forward to next year’s conference in May 2025.

We have hosted several webinars over the last few months including:

- May 23<sup>rd</sup>, IL-HPCO with our partners from Wisconsin's, WIHPCA held a webinar, "Emergency Preparedness for Hospice Providers" presented by Connie Polke Founder/CEO CHUG.
- June 18th, IL-HPCO with our partners from Wisconsin's, WIHPCA held a webinar, "Ethical Communication: Consideration in End-of-Life Care" presented by Dr. Tracy Schroepfer, Professor Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- June 26th, Ellen Byrne, Director of Policy & Government Affairs, IL-HPCO, Vice Chair POLST Illinois presented "RN Delegation & LPN Scope of Practice."

The Education Committee has grown after the conference with many new members including:

Courtney Stoner – Residential Hospice

Joyce Pancottine – Residential Hospice

Kayce Riordan – AccentCare

Dacia Keim – Transitions Care

Paige Medynskyi – Vitas

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**[Government Affairs Update from Ellen Byrne](#)**

Members of the Government Affairs Committee are celebrating two important legislative success stories for Illinois hospice providers. Senate Bill 2644, the **Advance Directives Registry Act** sponsored by Sen. Julie Morrison (Deerfield) passed in the General Assembly and is on Governor Pritzker's desk. This bill creates a registry for advance directives, starting with the Uniform POLST form, at the Illinois Secretary of State's Office. The registry will be available starting in 2027 and can be accessed by health systems, EMS, and health care providers. IL-HPCO will work closely with other stakeholders and state agencies to ensure the registry improves the quality of POLST forms and enables people to get all the care they need, but only the care they want, near the end of life. IL-HPCO also supported House Bill 4677 promoted by AARP and sponsored by Rep. Anna Moeller creating the **Illinois Caregiver Assistance and Resource Portal Act**. The language from this bill was included in the state budget package and requires the Department on Aging, in consultation with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Illinois Caregiver Assistance and Resource Portal, which would provide a wide range of resources related to caregiving.

IL-HPCO's efforts will continue over the summer and fall as we advocate for passage of the **Hospice & Palliative Care Loan Repayment Act** sponsored by Sen. Lakesia Collins (Chicago) and legislation requiring Illinois to join the multistate nursing compact. Also, of interest to hospice providers, SB3499, the End-of-Life Options Act was not considered by legislators this spring but may be voted on in the fall veto or lame-duck sessions later this year.

It was exciting that IL-HPCO leaders were able to increase the visibility of hospice & palliative care in Springfield. Executive Director Sara Dado and board member and POLST Committee Chair Dr. Julie Goldstein spoke at Sen. Julie Morrison's press conference in April about the POLST registry legislation. Director of Policy & Government Affairs Ellen Byrne testified to House Appropriations Health & Human Services Committee to educate lawmakers on the difference between hospice and palliative care, and IL-HPCO sent written testimony to both the Senate Appropriations Education Committee and the House Human Services Committee.

On the regulatory side of state policy, three members of the IL-HPCO Board are currently serving on the Illinois State Hospice & Palliative Care Advisory Committee, which works with Karen Senger at the Illinois Department of Public Health. This year, we have made it a point to candidly discuss oversight and regulation to protect access to high-quality hospice care for patients and families. The integrity of hospice care in Illinois remains high, and we have demonstrated our commitment to working with our state surveyors by making them aware of the early warning signs other states missed when suspicious hospices and bad actors began operating in CA, TX, and NV.

Additionally, the Palliative Care Subcommittee continues its work to research, evaluate, and make recommendations regarding policies the State of Illinois should adopt to ensure that adult community-based palliative care effectively improves the lives of all its adult citizens experiencing a serious illness.

IL-HPCO's advocacy doesn't stop at the state line. In May, we took the opportunity to provide comments on CMS fiscal year (FY) 2025 Hospice Wage Index and Payment Rate Update, Hospice Conditions of Participation Updates, and Hospice Quality Reporting Program

proposed rule. Thank you so much to members who took time to contribute to these comments through the member survey. We need your help to influence federal policy in the right direction.

Last but not least, Sara Dado and Ellen Byrne, alongside community health worker Kandis Draw with The HAP Foundation, and We Honor Veterans advocate and chaplain Kathy Jarman with Residential Hospice, attended the NHPCO–HAN advocacy event in Washington D.C. in June. Hospice Action Network (HAN) is the advocacy affiliate of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). We were so honored to represent our membership organization and all Illinois providers who care for people affected by serious and life-limiting illness. This year, we met with staff from both Sen. Durbin's and Duckworth's offices and the staffers of six U.S. House members. Our discussions emphasized hospice issues including the workforce crisis, telehealth flexibilities, veterans care, and reimbursement.



We recently welcomed several new members on the Government Affairs Committee to join our advocacy efforts. Please know that we are here to help you meet with your own state and federal policy makers! For more information, contact Ellen Byrne, Director of Policy & Government Affairs, at [ebyrne@il-hpco.org](mailto:ebyrne@il-hpco.org).



## Regional Meeting: August 13

# REGIONAL MEETING



**Topic of Discussion:**  
Hospice Regulatory Update

**Speaker:**  
Ellen Byrne

IL-HPCO Director of Policy & Government Affairs

1 CEU is available for  
nurses & social workers

**Tuesday August 13, 2024**

**11:30am - 1pm**

Northern Illinois Hospice  
4751 Harrison Ave Rockford, IL 61108

Members: Free  
Non-Members: \$25  
Lunch Included

Email Sara Dado [sdado@il-hpco.org](mailto:sdado@il-hpco.org) to RSVP



[Register Here](#)

Guest Article: We Honor Veterans

## Providing Palliative Care and Hospice for Illinois Military Veterans



Military Veterans have dedicated their lives to protecting our freedoms and values. Veterans have made significant sacrifices, including risking their lives in combat, enduring long separations from loved ones, and facing physical and mental health challenges such as physical injuries, traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, moral injury and other mental health issues. These sacrifices often have lasting impacts on their well-being and their families' lives.

Honoring Veterans' service, providing excellent Veteran-centric health care and recognizing their bravery and sacrifices is a moral obligation. Veteran-centric care is a tailored health care that ensures that Veterans receive the best possible health care and support, while respecting their experiences and needs. Not only does this approach

enhance Veterans' quality of life but also affirms our gratitude for their service.

There are currently 600,000 military Veterans in Illinois with 50% of that figure being Veterans over 65 years old. Only 45% of Veterans are enrolled in Veteran Administration (VA) health care with only 16% utilizing the VA for all their health care needs. Only 4% of Veterans die in the VA. There is a large cohort of aging Veterans presently in our patient population not utilizing the VA that need our knowledge of their Veteran status and our ability to tailor their health care, utilizing the best practices in Veteran-centric care.

How does a Palliative Care or Hospice practitioner even begin to understand the many nuances of military culture, health care issues, how to honor Veterans, how to connect Veterans with VA benefits, understand service-related conditions and more? The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, in collaboration with the Department of Veteran Affairs, created an excellent program entitled We Honor Veterans (WHV). This free resource for hospices has accumulated a vast number of educational resources for any organization to become a Veteran-centric organization. The WHV program will take your organization step-by-step through the processes of asking the question, "Have you served in the military?," assessing Veteran patients, connecting them with VA benefits, and recognizing Veterans for their service.

The WHV goals include:

- Promote Veteran-centric educational activities.
- Increase organizational capacity to serve Veterans.
- Support development of strategic partnerships.

- Increase access and improve quality.

Many of our Illinois' hospices are partners in WHV but we would like for every hospice to take the step of becoming a partner in the program. The men and women who wore the uniform deserve the best health care practices. Please go to the [www.wehonorveterans.org](http://www.wehonorveterans.org) website and sign up to be a partner.

WHV encourages health care providers to join a local Hospice-Veteran Partnership in their area (listed on the WHV website). The Chicagoland Hospice-Veteran Partnership provides education and collaboration with other hospices and the three VA's serving the Chicago area. If you would like to receive information on the next event on September 24th in Northlake, please email [Jarmank@residentialhospice.com](mailto:Jarmank@residentialhospice.com) and take a new step toward elevating your organization's capacity to care for aging military Veterans.

# residential





**Our mailing address is:**

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