



## Letter from Executive Director Sara Dado

As those of us who work in hospice know well, the only constant thing in our work is change! IL-HPCO is no exception. This month, we welcome Merilee Smith from Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care as our new Board President while extending a huge debt of gratitude to our outgoing President Doug Irvin from VITAS Healthcare. Doug has served IL-HPCO well with the perfect mix of compassion, leadership and wisdom at a time when it was very much needed. THANK YOU, DOUG, for your commitment to bringing IL-HPCO much closer to long term sustainability. I am excited about the depth of experience and knowledge that Merilee will bring as our new Board Chair as we continue to grow and expand our reach.

I wanted to extend a big thank you to so many of you who have engaged with our committee work since the Spring Conference. We have gained new members on every committee throughout this year and the insight that each of you brings to the work we are

doing is priceless. Thank you for being willing to participate and share your knowledge toward advancing our mission.

We plan to end 2024 strong. Our last regional meeting will take place on Friday, November 1st at Solvera Health in Galesburg. Please join us for a great noon hour of learning, lunch, and networking. Our last webinar of the year is taking place on Thursday, November 21st at noon. The topic is Caring for Veterans in honor of Veteran's Day. Register at [www.il-hpco.org](http://www.il-hpco.org).

There is so much coming in 2025! I can't wait to share more in the days and weeks again. Thank you so much for your ongoing support of the work of IL-HPCO and your commitment to supporting high quality hospice and palliative care in Illinois.

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## Letter from Chairperson Merilee Smith



I am honored to be assuming the role of Chair of the IL-HPCO Board of Directors. I need to thank Doug Irvin, Past Chair, for the time he spent guiding IL-HPCO through a pandemic and transitioning to a new management company, The HAP Foundation. Doug provided mentorship to me before this transition, which I am incredibly

grateful. The best news is he remains as a Past Chair for the Board's council.

In the past two years, under Doug's leadership, IL-HPCO's Board has grown in numbers and diversity of talent. Our partnership with HAP has given us resources to pursue opportunities including grants, education and advocacy. Sara Dado, Executive Director, has pushed our mission and energies to accomplish so much this past year. I am thankful to Sara for the work with the Board and her work with the Education Committee.

Please take a moment to read the detailed updates about the important work IL-HPCO is doing in the hospice community. Consider joining a committee if you have not had the opportunity to yet. The professional perspective you will gain and the rewards of what you may be able to contribute could be the highlight of your career. I know it has been and continues to be mine.

I look forward to a strong finish to 2024 and the sky's the limit in 2025 for IL-HPCO.

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## Education Update from Katie Lord



**As we begin to wrap up 2024, we are excited to start planning for 2025!**

**What an incredible year 2024 has been for IL-HPCO! Our partnership with The HAP Foundation helped solidify the organization and bring on new members, and we hosted our first in person conference since the pandemic, which was a huge success!**

**We are looking forward to growing even more in 2025 as we focus on more member education, thanks to the ELEA Institute Grant we were awarded earlier this year. The purpose of this grant is to improve education for community-based hospice and palliative care providers by developing a comprehensive education strategy, led by a part-time Clinical Education specialist (that's me!) and facilitated by a learning platform that fosters engaging, hybrid learning capabilities.**

As a clinician myself, I understand first-hand how valuable continuing education is, but I also understand how challenging it has become to set aside time for quality education while focused on providing patient care.

You can expect to see new hybrid learning offerings next year that focus on getting you the education you desire without taking too much time away from the bedside.

These educational opportunities will be housed on the IL-HPCO website, which is in the process of some very exciting updates. These updates will also showcase upcoming events and important updates from local and national partners, so you are always in the know!

There are many changes anticipated within Hospice & Palliative Care in 2025, and we want to equip you with all the resources necessary to adapt quickly and efficiently.

I truly believe that education is a powerful tool that enables each of us to provide the best care possible. When you KNOW better, you DO better, and I am excited to see what we can accomplish together to improve the hospice and palliative care experience throughout Illinois this year!

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## Government Affairs Update from Ellen Byrne

This summer and early fall has seen a flurry of activity for Government Affairs.

At the state level, IL-HPCO celebrates Governor JB Pritzker's Executive Order to establish the Illinois Multisector Plan for Aging (MPA). The executive order kicks off a cross-sector planning process to outline a clear framework for addressing the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. Illinois will join several other states that have developed or are in the process of developing multi-sector plans for aging, involving collaboration across various sectors including human services, health care,

government, philanthropy and private entities across the state. IL-HPCO is proud to have joined the Illinois Aging Together coalition, led by Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, and actively participated in the coalition's Advisory Committee, signing witness slips, and helping guide the campaign.

We are also closely watching the Medical Aid in Dying legislation in Illinois. The End-of-Life Options Act, Senate Bill 3499, was not considered by the Illinois General Assembly this past spring but may reemerge in the fall 2024 VETO session or a lame duck session at the beginning of 2025. The End-of-Life Options Act establishes the right of a competent, terminally ill adult to end their life through self-administered medications. It prescribes eligibility criteria and a process for clinicians and individuals to participate and contains protections for providers and employers of providers, so that clinicians who want to support patients to end their life may do so, but clinicians who don't want to participate, don't have to. IL-HPCO is encouraged that the bill recommends hospice referral & requires hospice use data collection. In other states, 80-90% of people who use medication to end their lives are receiving hospice. IL-HPCO will be working with those states who already have MAID to help guide our members if Senate Bill 3499 becomes law in Illinois. We encourage members to consider adopting a position and statement about SB 3499 for your community and the media. IL-HPCO has taken a neutral position on the legislation and created a statement delineating the purpose of hospice and palliative care as separate from MAID. You can refer media to IL-HPCO, if desirable.

Our work also continues in an effort to streamline the Hospice-Nursing Facility Room & Board Pass Through and establish state standards for Community-Based Palliative Care.

At the federal level, the FY 2025 Hospice Final Rule went into effect on October 1, 2024. There are two exciting developments coming to the Hospice Quality Reporting Program that hospices should be aware of. First, the CHAPS Hospice Survey is changing and moving to an online option with mailed follow-up beginning with hospice patients who die on or after April 1, 2025. The changes to the survey were informed by a group of technical experts who consulted with CMS, including hospice providers, and the goal is to improve clarity and participation by the family in returning surveys. Keep in mind that new web-mail mode for the CHAPS Hospice survey is optional



and will require technology upgrades for hospices that want to use that mode. Finally, the time a family must return the survey is extended from 42 to 49 days.

Additionally, CMS has finalized plans to implement the HOPE Tool. IL-HPCO strongly supports CMS's commitment to improve hospice quality using HOPE, but we cannot stress enough that the burden on hospices associated with HOPE's implementation will be significant! Hospices can anticipate extra costs, time, and resources to upgrade and test new Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems and infrastructure as well as new workflows to come into compliance. Starting on or after October 1, 2025, hospices must collect and submit standardized quality data on each patient using the HOPE tool no matter who is paying for care (Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance). IT developers and vendors are critical partners, so be sure to reach out to your vendor sooner rather than later. For more information see [HOPE Data Collection Timepoints Explainer Video \(youtube.com\)](#) and look for more resources from CMS by bookmarking this page: [HOPE | CMS](#).

Thanks for supporting the work of the IL-HPCO Government Affairs Committee. Be sure to reach out to Ellen Byrne ([ebyrne@il-hpc.org](mailto:ebyrne@il-hpc.org)) or Sara Dado ([sdado@il-hpc.org](mailto:sdado@il-hpc.org)) if you have questions or want to get involved in our advocacy efforts!

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**Celebrating the contributions of Cordt T. Kassner, PhD, as he completes his Board of Director's Term**



As IL-HPCO reflects on another year of growth and impact, we take this moment to celebrate one of our esteemed leaders, Dr. Cordt Kassner, who is completing his term as Secretary and Board member. Over the past nine years, Cordt has played a pivotal role in helping shape IL-HPCO's strategic vision, ensuring successful progression toward our mission to promote and enhance palliative and end-of-life care in the state of Illinois through education, advocacy, technical and supportive services.

Serving on the Board since 2016, Cordt has collaboratively participated in IL-HPCO's governance, presented at our conferences, and shared research and strategic information to promote membership growth. Beyond his technical skills and strategic mindset, Cordt will be remembered for his compassionate



approach, always prioritizing the well-being of our community and advocating for inclusive, sustainable growth.

While Cordt may be leaving his seat on the Board, we know his passion for IL-HPCO and its mission will remain strong. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with Cordt in new and meaningful ways and are excited to continue our work together advancing our mission. Please join us in expressing our heartfelt thanks to Cordt for his dedication, leadership, and contributions to IL-HPCO. He will always be a valued member of our IL-HPCO family.

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## Apex Health Services Visit



**APEX** | HEALTH SERVICES  
YOUR CONTINUUM OF CARE PARTNER



Last month, Sara Dado visited with the leadership team at [Apex Health Services](#) in Westmont. Apex recently joined IL-HPCO and is excited to get involved with the work of the state association. Thank you, Shelley Cartwright and the leadership team, at Apex Health Services for such a warm welcome and great discussion. If you are interested in having a visit to your hospice, please email [sdado@il-hpco.org](mailto:sdado@il-hpco.org).

## Regional Meeting at Northern Illinois Hospice



**In August, IL-HPCO hosted its second regional meeting this year. Thank you to Northern Illinois Hospice for being a humbling host to this successful gathering of members in the northern Illinois area. We had an outstanding turnout of engaged leaders who learned for each other and networked with some they may have not seen in some time.**

**We are looking forward to our final Regional Meeting this year next month in Galesburg!**

# 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



Friday November 1, 2024

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. CT

Solvera Health

256 S Soangetaha Rd, Galesburg IL

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

Visit [www.il-hpco.org](http://www.il-hpco.org) to register.

Any questions? Email Sara Dado [sdado@il-hpco.org](mailto:sdado@il-hpco.org)



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[IL-HPCO/WiHPCA Webinar](#)



2024 ILHPCO/WIHPCA Webinar Series

## “Caring for Veterans at End of Life”

By: Kathy Jarman,  
Hospice Chaplain at  
Residential Hospice



November 21, 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](http://www.il-hpco.org)

[Register Here](#)



# The HAP Foundation presents: Family Reflections: The End-of-Life Journey

 The HAP Foundation

PRESENTS

## “Family Reflections: The End-of-Life Journey”

Signature Event

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2024

10:30 A.M. CHECK IN

11 A.M. SEATED LUNCH FOLLOWED BY  
A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH

Dr. Martha Twaddle

*Waud Family Medical Director of Palliative Medicine and  
Supportive Care at Northwestern Medicine North Region*

Christopher Kennedy McKelvy

*Founder & Managing Partner of K. Ventures*

Peach Carr

*Fashion Designer*

UNIVERSITY CLUB OF CHICAGO

CATHEDRAL HALL

76 E. MONROE STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603

**SPECIAL TICKET PRICE FOR IL-HPCO MEMBERS: \$125**

[RSVP](#) by October 18

IN GRATITUDE OF OUR SPONSORS:



**Republic Bank**



**ROBERT LOZINS**



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**BEAUBIEN FAMILY**



**THE PMC GROUP**

Join us for a conversation on the end-of-life journey with personal reflections from our guest speakers Dr. Martha Twaddle, Christopher Kennedy McKelvy and Peach Carr. Our speakers will share the personal and professional experiences of their loved ones at the end-of-life and how this has shaped them into the person they are today.

Take advantage of the \$125 special ticket price offered to IL-HPCO members. Please RSVP by October 18.

[Register Here](#)

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