



**Hospice Council Annual Conference
April 1-3, 2025
NIU Naperville
1120 E. Diehl Rd., Naperville, IL 60563**

AGENDA

Tuesday, April 1

TU01 - Leadership Masterclass

Time: 1:00 PM-5:00 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Therapy, Private Duty

Speakers: Chris Taylor and Robbye Atkinson

Description:

Whether you're an emerging leader stepping into new responsibilities or a seasoned professional seeking to refine your approach, this Leadership Masterclass is designed to empower you with practical skills and actionable strategies for immediate impact. This intensive session will delve into core leadership principles to help you enhance your communication, decision-making, and team management abilities.

After the conference, participants will become a cohort that can continue their development through ongoing, in-depth training sessions, that create a sustained learning network for continued growth and support.

Objectives:

- **Develop Core Leadership Skills:** Identify and strengthen essential leadership competencies, including communication, delegation, and conflict resolution.

- **Enhance Strategic Decision-Making:** Learn frameworks and techniques for making informed and impactful decisions under pressure.
- **Improve Team Dynamics:** Gain practical strategies for building high-performing teams, fostering collaboration, and motivating individuals.
- **Master Effective Communication:** Refine communication skills to inspire, influence, and build strong relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.
- **Navigate Change and Uncertainty:** Develop resilience and adaptability to lead effectively in rapidly evolving environments.
- **Build a Network of Leaders:** Connect and collaborate with a cohort of like-minded professionals for ongoing support and knowledge sharing.
- **Apply Practical Tools and Techniques:** Implement immediately applicable strategies to enhance day-to-day work performance.
- **Participate in Continued Development:** Become part of a sustained learning community through post-conference, in-depth training sessions.

Bio

Chris Taylor, Senior Vice President of Channel Partnerships

With over 34 years of experience in leadership and leadership training, Chris Taylor is a seasoned expert in developing strong, effective leaders. He began his career by creating leadership seminars for university scholarship students, setting the stage for a lifelong commitment to empowering individuals and teams. Throughout his extensive career, Chris has held leadership roles at companies across various industries including GE, Honeywell, Medtronic, Allscripts, and Axxess.

For the past 21 years, Chris has concentrated his efforts on the care at home industry, working closely with leaders in home health, hospice, home care and palliative care. His experience has made him a trusted advisor and trainer, helping organizations foster strong leadership cultures and drive impactful change to help people receive the care they need at home.

Chris is passionate about developing leaders who can inspire and support others to deliver exceptional care, ensuring the highest standards of service in an ever-evolving industry.

Robbye Atkinson, Senior Regional Sales Manager

Robbye Atkinson brings more than 20 years of leadership experience across diverse industries, with a strong track record of managing teams, driving strategic initiatives and fostering community engagement. She has served in local board positions for her chamber of commerce and taken on various leadership roles that have contributed to the growth and development of her community. With 14 years of expertise in the care at home industry, Robbye is committed to enhancing quality of life through innovative leadership, strategic vision and a passion for service.

Wednesday, April 2

WE01 – Welcome/Business Meeting

Time: 8:00 -8:30 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speakers: Sara Ratcliffe, *IHHC*; Shelia Guither, *OSF Healthcare-Home Care*

Bio

Sara Ratcliffe is the Executive Director of the Illinois HomeCare & Hospice Council (IHHC), the Illinois Association of Community Care Program Homecare Providers (IACCPHP) and the HomeCare & Hospice Alliance of Maine (HCHAM), where she leads advocacy, education, and member services. With a proven track record of successful lobbying at the federal level, she excels in coalition building and finding creative solutions. Sara is actively involved in national home care advocacy, serving on the National Alliance for Care at Home Board. Beyond her professional work, she is dedicated to community service, including coordinating the Springfield Old Capitol Art Fair and participating in the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln Young Philanthropists.

Sheila Guither, MSN, RN, CWOCN, brings 28 years of diverse experience in the Home Care industry, spanning clinical and leadership roles. She currently serves as the Clinical Practice Manager for OSF Home Care, where she combines her expertise in patient care and organizational leadership. Sheila holds a Master's Degree in Nursing Education from OSF Saint Francis College of Nursing in Peoria, IL, a BSN from Mennonite College of Nursing in Bloomington, IL, and a certification as a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse from Emory University in Atlanta, GA. Sheila is the current President of the Board of Directors for the Illinois Home Care and Hospice Council (IHHC) and is committed to equipping Home Care clinicians to deliver safe, compassionate, and high-quality care to their patients.

WE02 – Washington Update – Steven Landers

Time: 8:30-9:30 AM

Audience:

Speaker: Steven Landers, *National Alliance for Care at Home*

Description:

Steven Landers, CEO of the National Alliance for Care at Home, will lead a session providing a comprehensive Washington update. This session will cover federal policy developments shaping the future of home care, focusing on payment reforms, improving access to care, and enhancing service quality. Attendees will receive insights into changes in reimbursement structures, caregiver support, and the role of technology in care delivery. The session will also explore how these policies impact providers, patients, and the home care workforce.

Objectives:

- Summarize key federal policy changes affecting home care.
- Explain current payment reform initiatives.
- Identify strategies for improving access and quality of home care.
- Describe the impact of policies on providers, patients, and the workforce.
- Recognize the role of technology and caregiver support in home care.

Bio:**Steven H. Landers, MD, MPH, Chief Executive Officer**

A recognized leader and innovator in home health, primary care and aging services, Dr. Steven “Steve” Landers brings almost two decades of experience as a physician, executive leader and public health policy advocate to lead The Alliance as its first Chief Executive Officer.

As a board-certified physician in family medicine, geriatric medicine, and hospice and palliative medicine, Dr. Landers has dedicated his career to seeking home- and community-based solutions for ill and aging Americans. He is a champion of the impactful role home care and hospice play in the health and lives of communities, acknowledging that as an aging nation, providing compassionate, dignified and cost-effective systems of care to patients is critical.

Dr. Landers graduated from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, where his training included a family medicine residency at Case Western and a geriatric medicine fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic. He also attended the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, where he focused on health policy and management. He received a bachelor of arts in political science from Indiana University in Bloomington. Early in his career, Dr. Landers based his clinical practice on providing health care through house calls and has made thousands of home visits, primarily to low-mobility patients.

Dr. Landers has served on numerous boards and committees in the home-based care policy space, including past appointments to the boards of directors of the National Association for Home Care and Hospice, American Academy of Home Care Medicine, the Partnership for Quality Home Health, and the Alliance for Home Health Quality and Innovation (now Research Institute for Home Care). He has represented these organizations by engaging policymakers, including meeting with members of Congress; providing committee testimonies for Congress and state legislatures; and discussing home care policies and regulations with the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, the administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission officials, and federal agency staff.

Prior to joining The Alliance, Dr. Landers served in several executive leadership roles. He was the director of home care at the Cleveland Clinic, and for more than 11 years was the president and CEO of the Visiting Nurse Association Health Group, Inc. — one of the oldest, largest and highly respected home health, hospice and community health organizations in the country.

As a renowned author and thought leader in the care at home sector, his work has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal of the American Medical Association and the [Huffington Post](#). The work of Dr. Landers and his team to prioritize at-home vaccines for homebound seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic also has been featured by major news outlets such as [ABC’S Good Morning America](#) and [CBS Mornings with Gayle King](#).

WE03 – Strengthening The Illinois Direct Care Workforce: Trends, Innovations, and Systemic Change Dialogue

Time: 9:45-10:45 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speaker: Brandi Kurtyka CEO, *MissionCare Collective*

Description:

Join Brandi Kurtyka, CEO of MissionCare Collective, for an insightful exploration of the current state of the direct care workforce. This session will dive into emerging trends, workforce challenges, and the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) impacting those who provide care. Brandi will share national data, innovative strategies, and diverse perspectives on how payors, states, and stakeholders can collaborate to address critical gaps and drive systemic change.

This session invites thought-provoking dialogue, equipping leaders with actionable solutions to build a supported and thriving workforce. Don't miss this opportunity to drive innovation and advance workforce excellence in Illinois!

Objectives

1. Understand Key Workforce Trends and Challenges - Explore the latest data and trends shaping the direct care workforce, including the impact of Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) on Illinois caregivers.
2. Identify Collaborative Strategies for Systemic Change - Learn about innovative approaches for payors, states, and stakeholders to address critical workforce gaps and foster collaboration for long-term solutions.
3. Implement Actionable Solutions to Build a Thriving Workforce - Gain practical strategies to support and strengthen the direct care workforce, ensuring better outcomes for caregivers and those they serve in Illinois.

Bio:

Brandi Kurtyka, Co-founder and CEO of MissionCare Collective, is a distinguished expert in the home care workforce development space. Leading the largest caregiver community in the nation, Kurtyka has relentlessly dedicated the past decade to advancing and uplifting the care industry. Based in St. Petersburg, Florida, her unwavering mission revolves around transforming the culture of care, ensuring that it continuously improves. Driven by a deep-rooted passion and a sense of calling, Kurtyka envisions a world in which care professionals feel inspired and fulfilled, allowing patients to receive the exceptional care they deserve when and where they need it. Kurtyka is on the NAHC Policy and Private Duty Advisory Committees.

W04 - Awards Presentation

Time: 10:45 AM-11:15 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

W05 - Lunch

Time: 11:30 AM-12:45 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

WE11 – Evaluating and Managing Medicare Advantage/Commercial Payor Contracts

Time: 12:45-2:00 PM

Audience: HH

Speakers: Michelle Stone-Smith - *SimiTree*

Description:

The participant will be provided with background information to understand how managed Medicare/Medicaid payers are compensated. We will walk through some strategies on preparing providers to contract with payors. We will also discuss, some key strategies to negotiate contracts. Then we will walk through what happens after obtaining a contract and how to manage the payors expectations and ensure favorable renewals.

Objectives:

1. Overview of Industry Trends
2. Preparing Your Organization Strategically for MA Contracting
3. Mastering Rate Negotiations
4. Ensuring Contract Compliance Success
5. Optimizing Contract Management After Contracts Obtained
6. HOPE data collection - Types of Visits, Timepoints and Definitions

Bios:

Michelle Stone-Smith, MBA, is a proven visionary leader in post-acute care with over 30 years of technical, financial, and administrative experience in diverse and constantly evolving post-acute care environments. She has consistently achieved the highest levels of operational and financial performance.

Michelle began her post-acute care career as a claims auditor for Palmetto GBA and was quickly promoted to team lead and later to government contracts. By applying her experience, she rapidly advanced to executive roles in both financial and operational leadership at large, multi-state home health and hospice agencies. She also has extensive experience in start-ups, mergers, acquisitions, and Certificate of Need (CON) processes.

Michelle's expertise has been invaluable to the organizations she has mentored through consulting over the past decade. She has helped agencies quadruple in size while managing growth, meeting or exceeding key performance metrics, optimizing staffing and structures, transitioning software systems, and training staff on their roles and responsibilities. She has shaped numerous departments, including Health Informatics, Revenue Cycle Management, Intake, Business Development/Marketing, and Operations.

As a frequent presenter at NAHC and various state and regional home care associations,

Michelle is passionate about educating and promoting post-acute care services.

WE12 – Substance Use Disorder in the Terminally Ill Patient

Time: 12:45-2:00 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speaker: Meri Madison, *ProCare Hospice Care*

Description

Rates of substance use disorder are increasing in the general population and over 50% of palliative care physicians in the US spend time each day managing patients with substance abuse behaviors. This presentation will shed light on the unique challenges faced in end-of-life care for treatment of patients who have concurrent substance use histories, along with strategies for optimum symptom management.

Objectives

1. Understand the current landscape of substance abuse disorder overall and among patients at end of life.
2. Describe the challenges faced in end-of-life care for the treatment of patients with substance abuse disorder.
3. Explore symptom management issues related to a substance abuse history.

Bio:

Meri Madison is the Hospice Clinical Director for ProCare Hospice Care. Over the past 14 years, she has strived to provide clinically appropriate and cost-effective recommendations to hospice clinicians around the country.

Dr. Madison received her PharmD from Albany College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and completed a postgraduate hospice and palliative care residency at Niagara Hospice in New York. Her focus was pain and symptom management within inpatient and homecare settings. Dr. Madison's passion lies in providing quality nurse/physician education and training on hospice/palliative care-related topics including: Difficult Symptom Management at End of Life, and Deprescribing and Optimizing Medication Use.

WE13 – What Will and Will Not Work in 2025 For Generating More Billable Hours & Clients

Time: 12:45-2:00 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speaker: Welton Hong, *Senior Care Marketing Max*

Description:

Many home care agencies struggle with online marketing. Welton Hong highlights essentials: for more clients, focus on SEO and pay-per-click; for referrals, use social media. Both require a conversion-friendly website, solid online reputation (quality and quantity of reviews), mobile compatibility, and valuable content. Success demands adapting to digital marketing's evolving landscape. Agencies that stay current and proactive hold a significant advantage in their local markets.

Objectives:

1. Understand the basics of internet marketing for home care agencies
2. Identify effective marketing techniques for different goals (e.g., client acquisition vs. referral generation)
3. Recognize the importance of search optimization and pay-per-click advertising for driving client acquisition
4. Learn how social media can increase referrals
5. Acknowledge the need for a high-conversion website and strong online reputation
6. Understand the importance of mobile compatibility and high-quality content
7. Develop adaptability to keep up with the evolving nature of online marketing
8. Realize the competitive advantage of staying updated on digital marketing changes

Bio:

Welton is a leading expert in helping home care agencies generate more clients from online directly to the phone line. He's the author of the book "Home Care Marketing 2.0."

Welton has a graduate degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Prior to starting Ring Ring Marketing, he was a senior technologist at R&D facilities for Intel, Sun Microsystems, and Oracle. He regularly speaks at conferences and other events for people in the senior care and end-of-life industries.

WE14 – Home Health Case Management

Time: 12:45-2:00 PM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speaker: Sheila Guither, *OSF Healthcare-Home Care*

Description:

Home Health Case Managers play a critical role in overseeing comprehensive patient care. This responsibility involves setting meaningful care goals, continuously monitoring progress, and ensuring effective delegation. Additionally, success hinges on strong communication and collaboration with providers and the interdisciplinary care team—all with a focus on achieving optimal outcomes and maximizing efficiency. This presentation introduces an advanced case management model designed to elevate the role of the Home Health Case Manager, equipping them to drive positive outcomes for both patients and the organization. Attendees will gain actionable insights into refining their approach to Home Health case management, empowering them to achieve lasting improvements in care quality and efficiency.

Objectives:

1. Learner will implement effective strategies to set, monitor, and achieve patient-centered goals in Home Health care, enhancing overall patient outcomes.
2. Learner will clearly define and assume responsibilities as a case manager, fostering accountability for measurable patient outcomes.
3. Learner will design and apply strategies to optimize their organization's Home Health case management framework, driving efficiency and improved patient care results.

Bio:

Sheila Guither, MSN, RN, CWOCN, brings 28 years of diverse experience in the Home Care industry, spanning clinical and leadership roles. She currently serves as the Clinical Practice Manager for OSF Home Care, where she combines her expertise in patient care and organizational leadership. Sheila holds a Master's Degree in Nursing Education from OSF Saint Francis College of Nursing in Peoria, IL, a BSN from Mennonite College of Nursing in Bloomington, IL, and a certification as a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse from Emory University in Atlanta, GA. Sheila is the current President of the Board of Directors for the Illinois Home Care and Hospice Council (IHHC) and is committed to equipping Home Care clinicians to deliver safe, compassionate, and high-quality care to their patients.

WE21 – Strategies to Improve Employee Engagement and Retention

Time: 2:15-3:30 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Therapy, Private Duty

Speaker: Cheryl Adams, *At-Home Health Care of Sparta Community Hospital*

Description: The healthcare industry is undergoing a seismic shift as organizations adapt to the demands of a post-COVID world. In their quest to remain competitive and deliver exceptional patient care, many companies have prioritized new tools and strategies. However, in this rush, employee engagement often takes a backseat, leading to rising stress and burnout among healthcare workers.

Objectives:

1. Understand the Impact of Engagement
2. Identify Effective Strategies
3. Apply Best Practices

Bio:

Cheryl Adams, RN, BSN, MBA, brings an impressive 46 years of clinical nursing and healthcare executive experience to her role as the administrator of At-Home Health Care of Sparta Community Hospital, a position she has held since the agency's inception in 1996. In this capacity, Cheryl has been instrumental in developing, implementing, and sustaining the business plan for this hospital-based home health agency.

Cheryl is deeply committed to advocating for the home care industry and the individuals it serves. She believes that it is vital for leaders in home care to not only ensure access to care but also maintain high standards of quality for the services provided.

WE22 – Producing Single-digit Readmissions in Home Health

Time: 2:15-3:30 PM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speaker: Arnie Cisneros & Kim McCormick, *Home Health Strategic Management*

Description:

Volume to Value (V2V) reforms have rewired the Home Health model in terms of care development and delivery since the introduction of PDGM. Earlier this year, Value-based Purchasing was installed for Home Health, connecting payment levels to outcomes for the first time in our industry. A review of the requirements for the VBP bonus reveals outcomes rarely seen to date in HHCAPS, Readmission, Timeliness, and Clinical Outcomes. HH Readmissions must be in the single-digits if a Provider hopes to qualify for the VBP bonus, and most Providers post readmit levels in the mid-teens. This session will review agencies who have posted single-digit readmits under PDGM to identify best-practices that reduce readmissions to single-digits. Case studies will outline how to start on the path to single-digit readmissions in your agency.

Objectives:

1. Review HH history of readmission through PPS and under PDGM
2. Demonstrate prime drivers of HH readmissions
3. Outline readmission requirements for VBP bonus qualification
4. Propose Operational Model that produces single-digit readmissions

Bio:

Arnie Cisneros is the President of Home Health Strategic Management; he has 30+ years of experience as a Physical Therapist across the care continuum, and he serves as a Post-Acute Consultant for multiple Health Systems and HH Providers. He is renowned for his adaptation of traditional Healthcare operations to address ongoing CMS reforms.

Kimberly McCormick, RN/BSN is a highly accomplished nurse consultant in the Home Health industry, Kim is an Executive Clinical Director for Home Health Strategic Management. 24 years experience in Home Health, 8 as Administrator of a Home Health Agency, has given her the experience and the knowledge to provide unrivaled insight into the home care arena. Kimberly served as an Associate Consultant with Home Health Strategic Management for 2 years, during which she has established herself as an expert in the area of Utilization Management of Home Health services. During her time as Administrator, she achieved deficiency-free surveys by The Joint Commission, deficiency-free Department of Health and CMS surveys, and a 0.42% error rate on an ADR audit. Kimberly authors the HHSM nursing newsletter and is presenting nationally on home care topics and care models proposed by CMS and MedPac for the future of the Home Health industry.

WE23 – HHVBP – Managing Under the New CY 25 Measure Set

Time: 2:15-3:30 PM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speaker: Chris Attaya & Kimberly Banker, *Strategic Healthcare Programs (SHP)*

Description:

CY 2025 begins the third year of HHVBP and includes an updated measure set. Although the second performance year is now over, what should agencies be doing today to improve outcomes and increase the chance for higher TPS scores and payment adjustments. Annual payment adjustments are now being applied based on your CY 2023 TPS results. Compare your agency TPS scores to your peers to see where you have opportunities to improve. Tracking the trends in existing measures is important, but

how should you be managing the new measures and understand how they contribute to your TPS scores in the expanded HHVBP model. Understanding the new measure changes is imperative, especially regarding coding OASIS and the GG-items to obtain a realistic DFS Expected score. Join our speakers in understanding the new measures and strategies to improve your outcomes and TPS scores.

Objectives:

1. Describe the new CY 2025 HHVBP measures and how they are calculated
2. Compare how scores are changing over the first two years of the expanded model
3. Examine how to translate measure points and scoring to the TPS and APR
4. Analyze clinical strategies to improve your HHVBP measure scores

Bio:

Chris Attaya joined SHP in 2014 after spending 28 years in executive and consulting positions within the Home Health and Hospice industry. In his role, he is responsible for product development and client relationships to help organizations achieve increased operational and financial performance through the use of SHP's industry leading analytics platform and benchmark data. Prior to SHP, Chris was the CFO at the VNA of Boston and had worked at Partners Health Care at Home as CFO and CEO. He received a B.A. in Public Health from Tufts University and an M.B.A. from the Graduate School of Management at Boston University, concentrating in Health Care Finance.

Kim Banker, RN, BSN, is a seasoned Product Manager and Home Health/Hospice Subject Matter Expert with 23 years of experience in the home health industry. Kim's extensive background in home health care informs her role in overseeing products designed to help customers achieve clinical and operational success in both home health and hospice settings. Her expertise ensures that these products meet the highest standards and support the unique needs of her clients

WE24 – HOPE Tool – What is it and What is the Impact on Agency Operations and Performance?

Time: 2:15-3:30 PM

Audience: Hospice

Speaker: Michelle Stone-Smith, MBA, SimiTree.

Description:

This session will provide an overview of the Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation (HOPE) tool, and how to prepare for the transition. The participants will learn about the HOPE tool, including the timing and transition from HIS to HOPE. In addition, to helping to prepare the agency through education, EMR vendor collaborations, and outcomes.

Objectives:

1. Background and objective of HOPE
2. HOPE data collection - Types of Visits, Timepoints and Definitions
3. Example of the HOPE Tool
4. What does the transition from HIS to HOPE look like
5. Preparing your agency

Bio:

Michelle Stone-Smith, MBA, is a proven visionary leader in post-acute care with over 30 years of technical, financial, and administrative experience in diverse and constantly evolving postacute care environments. She has consistently achieved the highest levels of operational and financial performance.

Michelle began her post-acute care career as a claims auditor for Palmetto GBA and was quickly promoted to team lead and later to government contracts. By applying her experience, she rapidly advanced to executive roles in both financial and operational leadership at large, multi-state home health and hospice agencies. She also has extensive experience in start-ups, mergers, acquisitions, and Certificate of Need (CON) processes.

Michelle's expertise has been invaluable to the organizations she has mentored through consulting over the past decade. She has helped agencies quadruple in size while managing growth, meeting or exceeding key performance metrics, optimizing staffing and structures, transitioning software systems, and training staff on their roles and responsibilities. She has shaped numerous departments, including Health Informatics, Revenue Cycle Management, Intake, Business Development/Marketing, and Operations.

As a frequent presenter at NAHC and various state and regional home care associations, Michelle is passionate about educating and promoting post-acute care services.

WE31 – Exploring the New Frontier of AI in Home Care & Hospice

Time: 4:00-5:15 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speaker: Justin Grammens, *Recursive Awesome, LLC Artificial Intelligence Strategic Consulting*

Description:

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming the home care and hospice industry, addressing critical challenges such as staffing shortages, patient complexity, and operational inefficiencies. In this session, we will explore how AI is revolutionizing care delivery, improving workforce efficiency, and enhancing patient outcomes. From predictive analytics and AI-powered virtual assistants to automated referral management and real-time patient monitoring, attendees will gain insights into the latest AI innovations shaping the future of home-based care. Join us as we navigate the evolving AI landscape and uncover practical strategies for integrating AI into home care and hospice services.

Objectives:

1. Understand AI's Role in Home Care & Hospice
2. Identify Key AI Applications in Home Care
3. Explore the Impact of AI on Workforce Challenges
4. Address Common Barriers to AI Adoption
5. Prepare for the Future of AI in Home-Based Care

Bio:

Hi! I'm **Justin Grammens**, a lifelong learner, speaker, thought leader, podcast host, and educator on Artificial Intelligence and Healthcare Technology.

I'm the founder and CEO of Recursive Awesome and Lab651, where our teams consult with our clients to leverage Artificial Intelligence and build custom software applications to bring efficiency and automation to their business. I am a board member at Code4Pro, providing technical strategy for developing a real-time Artificial Intelligence platform that measures individual first responders' physical (biometric) stress levels. I am the president and co-founder of the 501(c)(3) non-profit Applied AI, the creator, producer, and host of the Applied AI Podcast, the owner and publisher of Applied AI Weekly News, and an Adjunct Professor teaching graduate-level engineering courses at the University of Saint Thomas.

Most importantly, I'm blessed to have a loving wife and two amazing boys. They are the light of my life and keep me strong and centered. Let's connect! I would love to help you in any way I can.

WE40 – Exhibitor Reception

Time: 5:15-7:00 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Thursday, April 3

TH01 – Breakfast in Exhibit Hall

Time: 7:30-8:30 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

TH02 – Hot Topics

Time: 8:30-10:00 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speakers: Melinda Gaboury, *Healthcare Provider Solutions*; Sara Ratcliffe, *IHHC*

Description:

Hot off the presses! Join Melinda Gaboury and Sara Ratcliffe for up-to-the-minute federal and State regulatory and reimbursement news impacting home health, hospice and private duty providers. This much anticipated and highly informative session will leave you knowing exactly what your agency's future holds.

Objectives:

1. Identify recent and planned regulatory and reimbursement changes impacting agencies in Illinois

2. Identify ways agencies can comply with new and updated regulations
3. Identify how IHHC advocates for its members on regulatory matters impacting care at home

Bio:

Melinda A. Gaboury is co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Healthcare Provider Solutions, Inc. (HPS). Melinda Gaboury and Mark Cannon founded the company in April 2001 to provide financial, reimbursement, billing, operational and clinical consulting to the home care and hospice industries. Melinda A. Gaboury, with more than 30 years in home care, has over 22 years of executive speaking and educating experience, including extensive day to day interaction with home care and hospice professionals. She routinely conducts Home Care and Hospice Reimbursement Workshops and speaks at state association meetings throughout the country. Melinda has profound experience in Medicare PDGM training, billing, collections, case-mix calculations, chart reviews and due diligence. UPIC, RA, ADR & TPE appeals with all Medicare MACs have become the forefront of Melinda's current impact on the industry. She is currently serving as the Chair of the NAHC/HHFMA Advisory Board and Work Group and is currently serving on the Board of Directors for both the Home Care Association of Florida & Tennessee Association for Home Care. Melinda is also the author of the [*Home Health OASIS Guide to OASIS-E and Home Health Billing Answers, 2023.*](#)

Melinda attended Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee and received her Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. She began her career in 1991 with a large Tennessee based home care chain as a staff accountant and later joined a national healthcare consulting firm as their Reimbursement Manager.

Sara Ratcliffe is the Executive Director of the Illinois HomeCare & Hospice Council (IHHC), the Illinois Association of Community Care Program Homecare Providers (IACCPHP) and the HomeCare & Hospice Alliance of Maine (HCHAM), where she leads advocacy, education, and member services. With a proven track record of successful lobbying at the federal level, she excels in coalition building and finding creative solutions. Sara is actively involved in national home care advocacy, serving on the National Alliance for Care at Home Board. Beyond her professional work, she is dedicated to community service, including coordinating the Springfield Old Capitol Art Fair and participating in the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln Young Philanthropists.

TH04 – Break with Exhibitors

Time: 10:00-10:30 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

TH11 – Labor Law Update

Time: 10:30-11:45 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speakers: Aimee Delaney, *Hinshaw & Culbertson*

Description:

Each year brings new regulation at the local, state and federal level for labor and employment compliance. Employers with operations in Illinois in particular have many new rules to keep up with that impact current policies and procedures. This presentation will provide a comprehensive overview of the updates and changes in the past year.

Objectives:

- Obtain overview of new state laws expanding employment protections and benefits for employees, including new paid time off requirements, unpaid leave benefits, commuter benefits and more.
- Obtain overview of new and proposed federal rules and regulations impacting employment liability, including changes to the salary threshold for exempt employees, new rules impacting joint employment and independent contractor status, and more.
- Learn best practices for compliance

Bio:

Aimee Delaney counsels employers on all aspects of the employment relationship. She is passionate about working with her clients to provide strategic, tailored solutions for their employee-related issues. Aimee has assisted human resources professionals, managers, and in-house counsel on matters spanning from hire through termination, including:

- leave and disability considerations;
- misclassification issues;
- employee misconduct;
- and other disciplinary matters.

Aimee's traditional labor law practice includes representing management in labor negotiations, grievances and labor arbitrations, and labor board proceedings.

With her extensive experience in the area of labor and employment, Aimee also develops and provides management and employee training programs. Focused on minimizing potential employment liability and ensuring compliance with state and federal laws governing the workplace, the programs cover anti-harassment and anti-discrimination, as well as a variety of other employment law-related topics.

In addition to being a member of Hinshaw's Executive Committee, she was appointed to the firm's Management Committee in 2019. She also served as the leader of Hinshaw's Labor and Employment Practice Group from 2014 to 2019.

A graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Aimee has been an adjunct professor at her alma mater for more than a decade, where she teaches Employment Law and Labor Law.

TH12 – Home Health Compliance & The New Access to Care Condition of Participation

Time: 10:30-11:45 AM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speakers: J'non Griffin, *ACHC*

Description:

This presentation explores the latest compliance requirements in home health, focusing on the newly introduced Access to Care Condition of Participation (CoP). It will cover the key provisions, regulatory expectations, and strategies for ensuring compliance while enhancing patient access to essential home health services. Attendees will gain insights into operational adjustments necessary to meet these updated standards.

Objectives:

1. Understand the key provisions and regulatory expectations of the new Access to Care Condition of Participation (CoP) in home health.
2. Identify potential areas of non-compliance related to the Access to Care CoP.
3. Develop strategies for ensuring compliance with the Access to Care CoP and other relevant home health regulations.

Bio:

J'non Griffin, RN, MHA, HCS-D, COS-C, HCS-H, has over 30 years of leadership experience with home health and hospice agencies. An ACHC Certified Consultant, she is also an AHIMA-approved ICD-10 trainer/ambassador and is certified in home care and hospice coding, OASIS competency, and home care compliance.

TH13 – Connecting the Dots from Orientation to HH VBP Success

Time: 10:30-11:45 AM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speakers: Mike Carr, *Axxess*

Description:

This is a presentation aimed at helping agencies understand and navigate the Home Health Value -Based Purchasing (HH VBP) model. This model, which ties Medicare payments to quality outcomes, can significantly impact an agency's financial health. The presentation outlines a step-by-step approach, starting with the orientation and training of staff and leads to the successful implementation of HH VBP strategies.

The focus is on building a strong foundation through effective onboarding and ongoing education, ensuring all staff members understand how their roles contribute to value -based care. Key areas that will be covered include understanding the updated calculations for the Discharge Functional score which utilizes OASIS GG items and influences 20% of the overall score. The presentation emphasizes the importance of data collection, accuracy in documentation, and performance improvement initiatives that align with the HH VBP model.

Attendees will learn how to connect each phase of staff orientation to larger organizational goals, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. By the end of the session, participants will have actionable insights into how to enhance their HH VBP performance, improve patient outcomes, and maximize financial rewards, ensuring both patient and agency success in the competitive home health environment.

Objectives:

1. Understand the Fundamentals of HH VBP - Attendees will gain a clear understanding of the HH VBP model, including its structure, KPIs and how it impacts Medicare reimbursement.
2. Align Orientation with Value-Based Goals - Participants will learn how to actively integrate value-based care principles into staff orientation and training programs, ensuring that all team members contribute to improved patient outcomes and HH VBP performance.
3. Implement Strategies for Continuous Improvement - Attendees will be equipped with actionable strategies for improving clinical outcomes, enhancing accuracy and leveraging data to drive performance.

Bio:

Mike Carr is the Director of Training and Education for our Axxess e-learning product. His clinical expertise and industry knowledge has been critical to the development and implementation of the Axxess Training and Certification program. Mike has been intimately involved in the program's design, development, and creation and now oversees an international team of content developers, engineers and support personnel.

Mike joined Axxess in 2018 through the acquisition of Home Health Gold. Mike had worked directly for Home Health Gold for more than a decade where he served in a variety of roles. Mike's background as a physical therapist was instrumental to the development of many of the Home Health Gold and Axxess analytics related to functional scoring, therapy thresholds, PDGM, VBP and episode management.

TH14 – Removing the Smoke & Mirrors from “AI”

Time: 10:30-11:45 AM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speakers: Trey Holterman, *Tennr*

Description:

In this session, Trey Holterman, CEO and co-founder of healthcare automation platform Tennr (and graduate of Stanford's AI Lab) will discuss what “AI” truly is, and what it is not. You'll come away from this masterclass with an understanding of the best use cases for machine learning models and will be able to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Objectives:

1. A brief history of “AI”, real and phony
2. The best use cases for machine learning
3. How to spot BS and evaluate “AI” software solutions for healthcare businesses

Bio:

Trey studied Computer Science with a focus on Machine Learning at Stanford. Prior to starting Tennr he focused on applying his research in the health technology world at HealthIQ and Strava.

TH21 – Levels of Care in Hospice – How to be Successful

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

Audience: Hospice

Speakers: Katherine Morrison, *WellSky*

Description:

This session provides a practical guide to mastering the complexities of hospice levels of care (Routine Home Care, Continuous Home Care, Inpatient Respite Care, and General Inpatient Care). We'll explore the criteria for each level, discuss effective assessment strategies to ensure appropriate placement, and address common challenges in transitioning between levels. Learn how to optimize resource utilization, enhance communication with interdisciplinary teams and families, and ultimately, deliver seamless, patient-centered care that aligns with regulatory guidelines and promotes comfort and dignity. Practical examples and case studies will be used to illustrate successful strategies and foster interactive discussion.

Objectives:

1. Identify and Apply Hospice Level of Care Criteria.
2. Optimize Patient Transitions and Resource Use.
3. Improve Interdisciplinary and Family Communication.

Bio:

Katherine Morrison is the Director of Hospice Consulting Operations for WellSky, is an RN and holds a Master of Science in Nursing with a major in Nursing Informatics and a focus on Homeland Security. She has served in advancing levels of hospice leadership within large, multi-site health systems both in the Midwest and on the eastern seaboard and has extensive expertise in regulatory, compliance, and operational issues. As the subject matter expert for WellSky, Ms. Morrison monitors the changing economic and regulatory changes that impact all areas of hospice. She is a passionate advocate for patients and providers of palliative care and hospice. Ms. Morrison holds a certificate in hospice compliance from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and is a Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse (CHPN) and an End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) trainer.

TH22 – The Next Frontier: Monitoring Utilization Amidst Staffing Shortages

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speakers: J'non Griffin, ACHC

Description:

As home health enters a new era, organizations must adapt to workforce shortages while maintaining high-quality patient care. This presentation explores innovative strategies for monitoring utilization, optimizing staff efficiency, and leveraging technology to navigate these challenges. Attendees will gain insights into data-driven, decision-making, workload balancing, and operational adjustments that will shape the future of home-based care in an evolving landscape.

Objectives:

1. Explore innovative strategies for monitoring and optimizing staff utilization in a resource-constrained environment.

2. Learn how to leverage technology to improve staff efficiency and enhance patient access to care.
3. Develop data-driven approaches to decision-making related to workforce management and resource allocation.
4. Gain insights into operational adjustments necessary to navigate the challenges of staffing shortages and ensure the long-term sustainability of home health services.

Bio:

J'non Griffin, RN, MHA, HCS-D, COS-C, HCS-H, has over 30 years of leadership experience with home health and hospice agencies. An ACHC Certified Consultant, she is also an AHIMA-approved ICD-10 trainer/ambassador and is certified in home care and hospice coding, OASIS competency, and home care compliance.

TH23 – Harness the Power of AI for Home Care Marketing Without Losing Your Personal Touch

Time: 12:00-1:15 PM

Audience: HH, Hospice, Private Duty, Therapy

Speakers: Marisa Snook, *corecubed*

Description:

AI has arrived, unpacked its bags, and moved right in. With programs like ChatGPT, Jasper, and Copy.AI, this new technology is swiftly on its way to becoming a regular part of our daily lives, impacting everything from high school students' essays to the care industry.

However, it's been somewhat of a rocky start for AI in content marketing. As with any new technology, it is taking time for marketers to accept and understand AI, and how it can be used most effectively. AI is still notoriously inaccurate and requires a good amount of fact-checking.

With worries about inaccuracies, AI bias, and how to use AI in Google search marketing without suffering "penalties," it's no wonder that there is confusion. Marisa will share how AI can be used by care companies for content marketing, along with best practice recommendations.

Objectives:

1. Understand best practices to create AI content
2. Learn how to use AI for social media and to improve the online customer journey
3. Uncover how AI is affecting online search marketing

Bio:

Marisa Snook has been working in public relations and marketing for over 20 years with a focus on in-home care marketing since 2005. She is the President and CEO at corecubed, and helped to develop corecubed's award winning home care marketing program, MOST. Marisa leads an extraordinarily talented team whose bench strength includes decades of home care marketing experience, digital marketing degrees and content writing and search marketing certifications.

TH24 – Innovations in Value Based Care for Home Based Services

Time: 12:00-1:15 PM

Audience: HH, Therapy

Speakers: Tara Gagner & Ava Roper, *Advocate at Home*

Description:

Post-Acute Home Care Leaders will present two innovative value-based programs currently operational within Advocate at Home. The SNF (Skilled Nurse Facility) at Home and the CAV (Comprehensive Assessment Visit) programs will be featured. Learn how a home health agency can contribute to these programs and provide cost-effective patient-centered care.

Objectives

1. Define home based value-based care and its application to population health.
2. Describe components of a successful SNF at Home Program
3. Identify the patient population that would benefit from an annual home-based comprehensive assessment visit.
4. Discuss how traditional home health services can be integrated into innovative home-based programs

Bio

Tara Gagner M.S., A.P.R.N., ANP, B.C is the Director of Advanced Practice Clinicians Value Based Care Programs and is responsible for the oversight and management of all APCs working in a variety of post-acute settings. She is responsible for establishing clinical programs and improving the management of high-risk patient populations. She is a past nursing home DON and Adult Nurse Practitioner.

Ava Roper, MHA, BS is the Business Manager, Value Based Programs. Ava Roper has a BS in Community Health and an MHA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Ava came to Advocate Health as an administrative fellow and was the project manager for the development of the SNF at home program.