



# TEXAS ~ NEW MEXICO HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE ORGANIZATION

**44th Annual Conference** | Kalahari, Round Rock, TX



March 4-6, 2026 • Kalahari, Round Rock

This educational activity is jointly provided by Admeco and Texas New Mexico  
Hospice & Palliative Care Organization

# CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

## *Pre-Conference – Wednesday, March 4, 2026*

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 12:30 – 5:30 PM | Advanced Clinical Preconference Workshop                  |
| 12:30 - 5:30 PM | Hospice & Palliative Social Worker Preconference Workshop |

## *Conference Day 1, Thursday, March 5, 2026*

| Time/ CEUs       | Session                     | Room | Overview   |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------|--|
| 7:30 - 8:30 AM   | Early Riser                 |      | Nourish or Neglect: Food, Fluids, and Final Choices                                |
| 9:00 - 10:15 AM  | General                     |      | Plenary: Innovations and Updates Shaping the Future of Hospice and Palliative Care |
| 10:45 - 11:45 AM | Breakouts                   |      | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | A-1                         |      | To Poo or Not to Poo ... A Surgeon's Memoirs on Constipation                       |
|                  | A-2                         |      | All to do with HR (Staffing, Retention, Background Checks, etc.)                   |
|                  | A-3                         |      | The Missing Conversation: End-of-Life Planning for People with Disabilities        |
|                  | A-4                         |      | Ethical AI Governance in Hospice and Palliative Care: Balancing Innovation         |
| 11:45 - 1:00 PM  | Lunch                       |      |  |
| 1:00 - 2:00 PM   | Breakouts                   | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | B-1                         |      | The Power of Charting with Conviction; Active Documentation for Hospice RNs        |
|                  | B-2                         |      | Seven Dumb Mistakes Smart Hospice Professionals Make                               |
|                  | B-3                         |      | Aging, Sex, and Consent  |
|                  | B-4                         |      | We Need to Talk: Improving Quality and Care in End-of-Life Communication           |
| 2:15 - 3:15 PM   | Breakouts                   | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | C-1                         |      | Nausea: helping to keep it down  |
|                  | C-2                         |      | A Workforce Under Strain: After-Hours Models That Prevent Clinical Burnout         |
|                  | C-3                         |      | Communication Strategies Across the Stages of Dementia                             |
|                  | C-4                         |      | Symptom Management for Hospice Patients with Psychiatric Diagnoses                 |
| 3:15 - 4:00 PM   | Sweet Treat Break           |      |  |
| 4:00 - 5:00 PM   | Breakouts                   | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | D-1                         |      | Hospice Comfort Kits: Helpful or Harmful?  |
|                  | D-2                         |      | Designing a Compliance Driven Culture - Why We Need a Compliance Program           |
|                  | D-3                         |      | Toxic Empathy: When Compassion Goes Too Far  |
|                  | D-4                         |      | Palmetto GBA: Medicare Hospice Billing & Medical Review                            |
| 5:30 - 7:00 PM   | Welcome Reception: Room TBD |      |  |

## Conference Day 2, Friday, March 6, 2026

|                  |                                    |      |  |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------|--|
| 7:30 - 8:30 AM   | Early Riser                        |      | Therapeutic Presence   |
| 7:30 - 8:30 AM   | Early Riser                        |      | The Early Years: Orientation for New Hospice Administrators  |
| 9:00 - 10:00 AM  | General                            |      | <b>Plenary:</b> Welcome to Whoville Hospital: What Children's Stories Teach Us About Healthcare Communication and Ethics |
| 10:30 - 11:30 AM | Breakouts                          |      | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | E-1                                |      | Revisiting Pain Management in Children   |
|                  | E-2                                |      | HOPE Lessons Learned: Where We've Been & Where We're Going   |
|                  | E-3                                |      | Call to Duty – Serving the Veteran Population in Texas   |
|                  | E-4                                |      | OIG - Care Coordination and Hospice Services in Texas Medicaid   |
| 11:30 - 1:00 PM  | <b>Lunch &amp; Awards Ceremony</b> |      |  |
| 1:00 - 2:00 PM   | Breakouts                          | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | F-1                                |      | From Routine to Crisis: Understanding & Optimizing Hospice Levels of Care  |
|                  | F-2                                |      | Medicare Hospice Program Integrity: What This Means for Providers  |
|                  | F-3                                |      | Breaking Barriers: Tools and Resources to Improve End-of-Life Conversations  |
|                  | F-4                                |      | HHSC – Utilization Review  |
| 2:00- 2:15 PM    | Break                              |      |  |
| 2:15 - 3:15 PM   | Breakouts                          | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | G-1                                |      | Deprescribing in Hospice: Less is More   |
|                  | G-2                                |      | Hospice CAP - They Keep Asking for Money Back  |
|                  | G-3                                |      | Myth Busters: Childhood Grief Edition  |
|                  | G-4                                |      | HHSC - IDT and Core vs. Non-Core   |
| 3:15 - 3:30 PM   | Break                              |      |  |
| 3:30 - 4:30 PM   | Breakouts                          | Room | <b>Overview</b>  |
|                  | H-1                                |      | Managing and Documenting the "Gray Area" Patient   |
|                  | H-2                                |      | From Hire to Heart: Sustaining Mission-Driven Teams Across Generations   |
|                  | H-3                                |      | Transforming Hospice Care: Integrating Case Management, SDOH, and Age-Friendly Care                                      |
|                  | H-4                                |      | HHSC - Texas Medicaid Hospice Care   |

**Key – CME = Physicians, CNE = Nurses, CEU = Social Workers, CE = Admin/Other**

## **PRE-CONFERENCES: Wednesday March 4, 2025**

### **Advanced Clinical Preconference Track - 12:30 – 5:30 PM**

**When the Goal Is Comfort: Interdisciplinary Care During Oxygen Weaning at End of Life | Rachna Goswami, Palliative Care Physician & Kelley Newcomer, Medical Director, VNA Hospice of Texas** | This session reviews the role of oxygen at end of life, the emotional impact on patients and families, and a practical approach to symptom control during planned weaning. Using case examples, we'll share interdisciplinary strategies and tools for anticipatory prescribing, family education, and team support to optimize comfort during oxygen withdrawal.

**Documenting Signs and Symptoms – What Matters? | Linda Tavel, MD, Bristol Hospice** | Is it possible that not every symptom or physical sign relates to a terminal condition? When is ankle edema or a new rash not noteworthy? This session will examine the assessment and reporting of physical signs and symptoms and their relevance to terminal conditions and comorbidities in hospice.

**“We Do Do That” | Olivia Rogers, RN, CHPN, Chief Nursing Officer & Kelley Newcomer, MD, FAAHPM, Medical Director | VNA Hospice of Texas** | Hospice is changing; that is something we can all agree upon, but how best to respond to the changing hospice patient? Patients today are coming to us with a host of high-acuity problems and high-tech equipment. The old adage of “that is not in line with hospice philosophy” is no longer going to meet the needs of today’s hospice patient and family. Airvos, paracenteses, midlines, PICCs, palliative radiation, NOACs and more, this session will address how to find a way to say “yes”, and how to educate the patient and family on treatment options and consequences.

**Advanced IV Therapy | Marcus Zavala, Pharm.D., BCSCP, Chief Pharmacy Officer, Perrone RX & Perrone Pharmacy Inc. and Kelley Newcomer, MD, FAAHPM** | This talk will review how to order appropriate IV therapies such as PCAs with opioids, managing patients on home inotropes, converting from PO to IV and back to PO, using off label IV formulas to control symptoms orally/sublingually, and more.

### **Social Worker Preconference Track - 12:30 - 5:30 PM**

**Beyond the Caseload: Empowering Social Workers in Hospice Leadership | Brianna Ahmiche, LMSW, Bridge Hospice** | This session explores ways hospice social workers can expand and elevate their role beyond documentation, highlighting leadership competencies in bereavement support, substance-use risk assessment, safety planning, and community outreach.

**Dementia and Effective Communication: Helping Caregivers Communicate | Kathy Miller, LMSW, Hope Hospice** | This session equips hospice professionals with practical tools to educate caregivers on communicating with individuals living with dementia.

**Unspoken Goodbyes: Supporting Teens Through Grief in a Digital Age | Brianna Ahmiche, LMSW, Bridge Hospice** | This workshop provides trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate strategies to support grieving adolescents in hospice and community settings.

**Ethical Documentation in Social Work: Should I Write This Or That? | Valencia Hooper-Alexander, LMSW, Bella Hospice** | Documentation plays a vital role in social work practice, serving as the official record of events and interventions. The common adage, "if it isn't written, it didn't happen," underscores the importance of thorough and accurate recordkeeping.

## Conference Day 1 - Thursday, March 5, 2026

**7:30 to 8:30 a.m. | Early Riser | “Nourish or Neglect: Food, Fluids, and Final Choices” | Kelley Newcomer, MD FAAHPM, Medical Director VNA Hospice, Associate Professor UTSW** | Two cases involving nutrition and fluids at the end of life will be presented, covering voluntary stopping of eating and drinking as well as removal of artificial nutrition and hydration by a guardian. We will cover the legal and ethical dilemmas facing these issues in hospice and palliative care. There will also be small group discussion questions for audience participation. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## Keynote Day 1 - Thursday, March 5, 2026

**9:00 to 10:15 a.m. | Plenary | Innovations and Updates Shaping the Future of Hospice and Palliative**



**Care | Steve Landers, MD, MPH | CEO of The Alliance for Care at Home** | This session will explore the significant advances and positive developments transforming hospice and palliative care delivery in the United States. National Alliance for Care at Home CEO Dr. Steve Landers will examine key trends driving the success of the field, including expanded access to care, innovative care models, and increasing recognition of palliative care's role across the care continuum. Participants will gain insights into emerging opportunities, policy developments, and evidence-based practices strengthening the hospice and palliative care workforce. The presentation

will conclude with a discussion of how providers, policymakers, and advocates can build on current momentum to improve patient outcomes and expand quality end-of-life care. Attendees will leave equipped with actionable knowledge to advance hospice and palliative care initiatives within their own organizations and communities.

## 10:45 to 11:45 a.m. Breakout Session (Group A)

**A-1 | “To Poo or Not to Poo ... A Surgeon’s Memoirs on Constipation”**

**Philip Hamby, MD, FACS & Romeeka Siddique, MD, Hospice and Palliative Care Fellow | Texas Tech University Health Science Center** | This is a review of constipation particularly as it relates to the hospice and palliative care patient. The presentation is written from the perspective of a surgeon who is currently training in hospice & palliative care. It provides a workflow for helping patients who cannot pass stool and those who are truly “full of it.” The presentation is designed to provide practical and memorable advice for the management of constipation primarily for the hospice RN and the hospice physician. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## **A-2 | “All to do with HR (Staffing, Retention, Background Checks, etc.)”**

**Janet Gomez, LMSW, Alt. Administrator | Pax Et Vita Hospice Agency, LLC** | Successful hospice care begins with building a workforce that reflects both clinical excellence and organizational values. This session explores effective strategies for recruiting and retaining the right candidates beyond the interview stage, including values-based screening, reference verification, and competency assessments. Attendees will learn proactive retention techniques such as employee satisfaction reviews, open-door leadership practices, and transparent communication that fosters trust and long-term commitment. The session will also outline key compliance and quality practices, including timely background checks, re-screening requirements, and structured annual and bi-annual personnel file reviews, along with updates to policies, emergency preparedness plans, business profiles, and QAPI initiatives to ensure ongoing regulatory readiness and organizational excellence. **Audience: All | Level: New to Hospice**

## **A-3 | “The Missing Conversation: End-of-Life Planning for People with Disabilities”**

**Arielle Friedtanzer, End-of-Life Consultant** | Parents of children with special needs often fear a future when they can no longer provide care. Yet conversations about aging, death, and personal values rarely include adults with intellectual disabilities. Communication barriers and limited training among healthcare professionals contribute to this gap, risking end-of-life care that does not reflect individuals’ wishes. This session explores why these conversations aren’t happening, and what we can do to change that. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## **A-4 | “Ethical AI Governance in Hospice and Palliative Care: Balancing Innovation with Compassion”**

**Andrew Awoniyi, ND, RN, NI-BC, & Raianne Melton, RN, BSN, CHPN, Vice President of Patient Engagement & Analytics | Axxess** | Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform hospice and palliative care by improving staffing, symptom management, patient engagement, and resource allocation. Tools such as predictive analytics, decision support, and automation can help clinicians overcome time and communication challenges. However, AI use in end-of-life care raises important ethical, governance, and trust considerations. This session reviews the current landscape of AI in hospice and palliative care and best practices for using AI tools within electronic medical records. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## **1 to 2 p.m. Breakout Session (Group B)**

### **B-1 | “The Power of Charting with Conviction; Active Documentation for Hospice RNs”**

**Amy Cooley, RN, CHPN | Tribute Hospice and Palliative Care** | Discover the Power of Charting with Conviction! This engaging seminar is designed exclusively for hospice nurses who want to strengthen their voice through documentation. Learn how active, precise charting not only protects your patients and your practice but also reflects the true depth of your care. We’ll explore strategies to streamline notes, highlight clinical judgment, and confidently capture the art and science of hospice nursing. Walk away empowered, equipped, and inspired to chart with clarity, purpose, and conviction—because your words matter. **Audience: Nurses | Level: Intermediate**

**B-2 | “Seven Dumb Mistakes Smart Hospice Professionals Make”**

**Danny Mack, Director of Spiritual Care | Christian Care Communities and Services** | This engaging and eye-opening session designed to help hospice professionals identify common pitfalls that can impact patient care and team effectiveness. Attendees will leave with new awareness and tools to enhance compassion, professionalism, and quality care in the hospice setting. Those who attend will be motivated toward continuous improvement and job satisfaction. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

**B-3 | “Aging, Sex, and Consent”**

**Brianna Ahmiche, LMSW | Bridge Hospice** | Sexuality and intimacy remain vital parts of life at every age, including for patients receiving hospice and palliative care. Yet conversations about sex and consent in older adults are often overlooked, misunderstood, or avoided. This avoidance leads to ethical dilemmas, safety concerns, and unmet needs. This presentation explores how ageism, cognitive decline, and cultural taboos shape discussions of intimacy in aging populations. Participants will learn to identify red flags around capacity and consent, balance patient rights with safety concerns, and foster culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approaches to intimacy at the end of life. Through case studies and practical strategies, attendees will gain tools to support patients and families with compassion, dignity, and ethical clarity. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

**B-4 | “We Need to Talk: Improving Quality and Care in End-of-Life Communication”**

**Helen Bauer, BSN, RN, CHPN, End of Life Educator and Advocate | Hospice Navigation Services** | Clear and compassionate communication builds trusted relationships with patients, families, care partners, and communities. This session explores how empathic and coordinated communication by the interdisciplinary team improves patient and family experiences, contributing to better CAHPS survey scores and STAR ratings. Attendees will examine the impact of ineffective communication and learn practical ways to communicate with clarity, empathy, and professionalism. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## 2:15 to 3:15 p.m. Breakout Session (Group C)

### C-1 | “Nausea: Helping to Keep it Down”

**Thuy Hanh Trinh, MD, FAAHPM, HMDC, Team Physician | Houston Hospice** | Nausea is often a side effect of curative medications and can be persistent and debilitating for patients. This session will explore medical management options to help alleviate symptoms while safely titrating medications to optimize comfort. Participants will also learn strategies for counseling families about decreased oral intake, the physical changes associated with cachexia, and how to provide reassurance that symptom management remains focused on comfort and safety for both patients and their families. **Audience: All | Level: New to Hospice**

### C-2 | “A Workforce Under Strain: After-Hours Models That Prevent Clinical Burnout”

**Bernadette Smith, VP of Marketing | IntellaTriage** | With burnout and attrition among the biggest threats to hospice access, this session highlights innovative ways to support clinician work-life balance without sacrificing patient care. In hospice and home health, there are really three core after-hours care models, each with different impacts on nurse burnout, patient experience, and operational efficiency. Learn how different after-hours triage models impact fatigue, retention, and costs. Allow clinical teams to thrive in the roles they were trained for. This talk will share data from agencies who’ve adopted different approaches, including before-and-after impacts on morale and scheduling. **Audience: Supervisors/Managers/Leaders | Level: Intermediate**

### C-3 | “Communication Strategies Across the Stages of Dementia”

**Hollie Lowe, MA, LPC, NCC, Director of Education and Family Support Services | James L. West Center for Dementia Care** | This session explores how communication abilities evolve throughout the stages of dementia and offers practical, compassionate strategies to support meaningful connection at every phase of the disease. Participants will gain insight into how dementia affects language, comprehension, and expression in the early, middle, and late stages, including both verbal and nonverbal communication changes. Evidence-based techniques will be shared to enhance understanding and reduce frustration, such as simplifying language, validating emotions, using visual cues, and incorporating supportive tone, touch, and body language. Real-world examples will demonstrate how thoughtful adjustments in communication can strengthen relationships, promote dignity, and improve quality of life for individuals living with dementia and those who care for them. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### C-4 | “Symptom Management for Hospice Patients with Psychiatric Diagnoses”

**Linda Tavel, MD, Medical Director | Bristol Hospice** | It seems more patients are coming to hospice with psychiatric diagnoses in addition to their terminal conditions: schizoaffective disorder, MDD, schizophrenia, others. Their medications permit function and high-quality life experiences. Stopping or weaning these medications requires intentional case management. Also, as symptoms typical for hospice patients arise such as nausea, anxiety or delirium, drug interactions are a concern. The session will examine the role and management of patients' psychiatric medications as they journey.

## 3:15 to 4:00 p.m. Sweet Treat Break

## 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Breakout Session (Group D)

### D-1 | “Hospice Comfort Kits: Helpful or Harmful?”

**Lauren Templeton, DO, FAAHPM, HMDC, Consultant Physician, Pennant Group & Weatherbee Resources, & Ellen Fulp, PharmD, MSPC, BCGP, FAAHPM, Pharmacist, Parella Health** | Symptom management is a standard right of hospice patients. Hospices are tasked with developing individualized plans, including managing troublesome symptoms, considering each patient’s unique needs and preferences. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) highlighted adequate symptom management as an area of quality improvement for hospice agencies and developed the Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation (HOPE) tool as part of the Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP). Appropriate symptom assessment visits, treatment plans, and 24/7 access to the hospice team enable effective symptom management. Considering the importance of timely symptom management to decrease suffering, for many hospice agencies, it’s common practice to introduce a small quantity of medications for the management of new symptom onset. This session will highlight the potential benefits, harms, and best practices associated with planning for aggressive symptom management at end-of-life. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### D-2 | “Designing a Compliance Driven Culture - Why We Need a Compliance Program”

**Richard Y. Cheng, Esq., CHC, Managing Member | Ritter Spencer Cheng, PLLC** | This session introduces the foundations of hospice compliance and examines how a strong compliance program not only protects an organization but also serves as a strategic advantage. Attendees will explore the seven essential elements of a compliant program and learn how to build, implement, and sustain effective processes that support ethical operations and regulatory adherence. Discussion will include practical examples of risk assessments, ongoing monitoring, auditing practices, and corrective action planning to prevent issues that could trigger government investigation or enforcement. Participants will also gain insight into how compliance impacts Medicare reimbursement, as well as key considerations for compliance management during mergers and acquisitions, ensuring operational integrity and long-term organizational value. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### D-3 | “Toxic Empathy: When Compassion Goes Too Far”

**Jerry Fenter, System Director of Spiritual Counselors | Harbor Healthcare System** | This presentation will introduce leadership and management, as well as the professional caregiver to the concept of toxic empathy (also known as toxic altruism). While empathy and compassion are the backbone of effective hospice care, excessive or unregulated empathy can become harmful—to the care system, the team, patients and families, and the individual caregiver. The session will use real-world scenarios to illustrate how toxic empathy develops, the negative consequences that result when it’s unchecked, and strategies to identify and manage these patterns for healthier, more resilient caregiving. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

**D-4 | “Palmetto GBA Workshop (Billing and Medical Review)”, VIRTUAL SESSION Charles Canaan & Dan George, Senior RHHI Ombudsman and Senior Medical Review, Palmetto GBA** | This series equips hospice providers, billers, administrative staff, and clinicians with essential tools for mastering Medicare billing and documentation. Attendees will gain practical skills and insights to ensure compliance and success in navigating Medicare requirements. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## 5:30 – 7:00 PM – Welcome Reception- Location TBD

## Conference Day 2- Friday March 6, 2026

**7:30 to 8:30 a.m. | Early Riser | “Compassion Satisfaction and Therapeutic Presence” | Tommie Farrell, MD FAAHPM, HMDC, Medical Director, Hendrick Hospice & Faith Parsons, LCSW, Hendrick Palliative Care |**

The scientific field of quantum physics has taught us that on a molecular level, everyone exists in a virtual sea of energy and that each person is an integral part of that energy field, affecting and being affected by everything around them, simply by being present. We will discuss new ways to measure compassion on a spectrum from fatigue to satisfaction. We will then discuss specific techniques you can use to have therapeutic presence in every interaction of life.

**Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

**7:30 to 8:30 a.m. | Early Riser | “The Early Years: Orientation for New Hospice Administrators” | Rosalind J. Nelson-Gamblin, CEO & Sr. Consultant, RJNG Consulting |**

This presentation is designed for hospice administrators new to the role, fewer than three years, with a strong focus on the essential elements of clear communication and diligent oversight. Attendees will discover how consistent engagement with staff, families, and regulatory bodies, alongside vigilant review of operational reports, agency records, and referral outcomes, lays the foundation for excellence in patient care and compliance. Through strategic leadership and open channels of communication, administrators can foster a culture of transparency, improvement, and organizational success across all service locations. Tenured administrators are encouraged to attend to lend perspectives to the discussion. **Audience: Administrators, Management | Level: Beginner**

## Keynote Day 2 - Friday, March 6, 2026



**9 to 10:00 a.m. | Plenary | “Welcome to Whoville Hospital: What Children’s Stories Teach Us About Healthcare Communication and Ethics” | Jason Lesandrini, PhD, FACHE, LPEC, HEC-C | Healthcare Ethics Executive |** Healthcare runs on communication, yet our messages often miss the mark, especially when patients are scared or in crisis and may not truly understand what we’re saying. This interactive presentation uses familiar children’s stories to reveal common communication breakdowns in healthcare and the ethical problems they can create. Together, we’ll explore practical strategies drawn from these stories to improve communication with patients and colleagues and prevent conflicts before they arise.

## **10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Breakout Session (Group E)**

### **E-1 | “Revisiting Pain Management in Children”**

**Ana M Montanez, MD, Hospice and Palliative Care Fellow & Kelly Klein, MD, Hospice & Palliative Care Director | Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Lubbock** | Pain is one of the most common complaints in children, yet assessing and managing it has long been a challenge in pediatric care. While efforts to reduce opioid prescribing have helped address overdose risks, they may also contribute to the undertreatment of pain when opioids are appropriate. This session will review evidence-based guidelines for a balanced, multimodal approach to managing acute and chronic pain in children. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### **E-2 | “HOPE Lessons Learned: Where We've Been & Where We're Going”**

**Samuel Pate, Sr., Client Development Representative | Simple, a Netsmart Solution** | As hospice providers transition into the first months of using the new Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation (HOPE) tool and CMS reporting systems, valuable lessons are emerging that shape compliance and care delivery. This session reviews early experiences with HOPE implementation, including changes to daily workflows, the use of iQIES for data submission, and the real-world impact of new regulatory requirements. Attendees will explore strategies to streamline documentation and reporting, enhance accuracy, and prepare for the two new hospice quality measures tied to HOPE. The session will also offer guidance on improving efficiency and maintaining compliance while highlighting the latest CMS updates and anticipated developments in the Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP) and future applications of HOPE data. **Audience: Compliance Professionals, Clinical Leaders, Quality & Data Teams | Level: Intermediate**

### **E-3 | “Call to Duty - Serving the Veteran Population in Texas”**

**Rev. Edward Tello, Veteran Liaison/Bereavement Manager | CREST PALLIATIVE CARE** | Texas is now home to the largest veteran and military population in the nation, making focused attention on the needs of this community both timely and essential. Veterans face unique challenges, including elevated suicide rates and low utilization of hospice and VA-assisted end-of-life care. As Baby Boomer veterans reach advanced age, we are simultaneously honoring the final years of WWII veterans while actively caring for Vietnam-era veterans and those entering the Gulf War era. This session will introduce attendees to veteran culture and lived experience, explore the needs of veterans and their families, and provide an overview of the VA system and its role in supporting veteran care. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### **E-4 | “Care Coordination and Hospice Services in Texas Medicaid”**

**Patrick Smith, Audit Director | Texas Office of Inspector General** | This session will discuss the complexities associated with providing care to a medically fragile population while dealing with multiple regulatory environments and different payors. We will discuss examples of inappropriate levels of care coordination for pediatric hospice. In addition, we will discuss both required and best practices for providing hospice within Texas Medicaid. **Audience: Administrators, Compliance | Level: General (Everyone)**

## 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Breakout Session (Group F)

### F-1 | “From Routine to Crisis: Understanding & Optimizing Hospice Levels of Care”

**Katherine Morrison, Director Advisory Services & Cindy Campbell, Sr. Director of Advisory Services | WellSky |**

Hospice care is not one-size-fits-all—and understanding the nuanced levels of care is essential for strategic leadership and quality delivery. This session explores the four levels of hospice care—routine home care, continuous home care, inpatient respite, and general inpatient care—through the lens of regulatory compliance, interdisciplinary coordination, and patient-centered decision-making. Participants will gain insights into how appropriate utilization can impact reimbursement, clinical outcomes, and family satisfaction. Through case examples and best practices, hospice leaders will leave equipped with practical strategies to align care levels with organizational goals while enhancing team performance and overall service quality. **Audience: All | Level: Intermediate**

### F-2 | “Medicare Hospice Program Integrity: What This Means for Providers”

**MJ Ruppert, RN, CHC, Director of Regulatory Affairs | Community Health Accreditation Partner (CHAP) |** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has implemented increased scrutiny of hospice programs related to growing concerns over hospice service fraud as well as concerns regarding the integrity of hospice service provided. Hospice leaders must understand this new CMS survey landscape and the importance of key survey readiness to avoid enforcement remedies and ensure regulatory compliance. CHAP will provide an overview of the CMS Hospice Program Integrity priorities and survey landscape, enforcement remedies, and top survey findings; Strategies for implementation of an effective survey readiness program will be discussed. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### F-3 | “Breaking Barriers: Tools and Resources to Improve End-of-Life Conversations”

**Lisa Pahl, LCSW, APHSW-C | The Death Deck |** Conversations about death and dying are often avoided, even in hospice and palliative care, yet they are essential for honoring patient values, reducing conflict, and supporting families through some of life’s most challenging moments. This session provides practical and creative strategies to build confidence in initiating and guiding end-of-life discussions, using real case examples and interactive demonstrations to illustrate how structured communication tools can turn intimidating conversations into clear, compassionate, and empowering exchanges. Participants will learn to recognize common barriers to discussing end-of-life preferences, explore at least two validated communication frameworks, and practice skills that foster trust, clarity, and emotional support for patients, caregivers, and interdisciplinary care teams. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### F-4 | “HHSC – Medicaid Hospice Utilization Review”

**Lianne Pacl & Rachel Talamantez, Nurse Supervisors | Texas Health & Human Services Commission |** The presentation will discuss federal regulations and state rules applied to the Medicaid Hospice Utilization Review (UR) program. An overview of the scope and responsibilities of UR; the documentation request and clinical review process, and newly adopted rules. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## 2:15 to 3:15 p.m. Breakout Session (Group G)

### G-1 | “Less is More: Deprescribing Basics and Beyond”

**John Corrigan, PharmD, BCGP, Clinical Pharmacist, One Point Patient Care, & Avanti Gandhi, MD, Oasis Hospice Medical Director** | This presentation will examine deprescribing at end of life and identify medications commonly considered for deprescribing in the hospice patient population. Specifically, rationale for deprescribing antimental drugs, valproate drugs for dementia-related agitation, lipid-lowering drugs (e.g., statins), antiplatelet drugs, anticoagulants, cardiovascular drugs for primary hypertension, anti-diabetic drugs, inhalers, docusate, topical compounded gels and a few others will be discussed. Barriers to deprescribing efforts in the hospice setting and tools to assist with overcoming such barriers will also be reviewed. **Audience: All | Level: Intermediate**

### G-2 | “Hospice CAP - They Keep Asking for Money Back”

**David Schuerman, COO | Schuerman Business Consulting** | This session provides a clear and practical overview of the hospice Aggregate Cap (CAP), including how it is calculated, monitored, and managed to ensure regulatory compliance and financial stability. Using real-world examples, the presentation will walk attendees through the CAP formula step-by-step, breaking down the math and key components that often create confusion for providers. Participants will gain a better understanding of common CAP risk factors, documentation considerations, and strategies to proactively track and mitigate exposure, helping organizations remain compliant and financially prepared as reimbursement structures evolve. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### G-3 | “Myth Busters: Childhood Grief Edition”

**Kelly Cox, CCLS, GC-C, Family Support Coordinator, AlēvCare Hospice, & K. Tierney Titus, CCLS, Children’s Bereavement Program Manager at Faith Presbyterian Hospice** | Children grieve deeply, yet their needs are often overlooked in hospice and palliative care. This session dispels common myths about childhood grief and explores how developmental stages shape a child’s understanding of death. Participants will gain tangible strategies for honest, age-appropriate conversations, guidance on what to say (and not say), and practical ways to include children in the grieving process. We will also highlight the unique role of the Child Life Specialist and how this perspective can be integrated into hospice care. Attendees will leave with concrete tools to immediately implement in their practice and confidence in supporting grieving children and families. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### G-4 | “Core vs. Non-Core & the IDT”

**Jana Childers, Program Specialist & LaTasha Wilson, Program Specialist | Texas Health & Human Services Commission** | This session provides a clear and practical review of hospice requirements for core and non-core services, with an emphasis on how these responsibilities are coordinated and delivered through the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). Attendees will gain a comprehensive understanding of mandated service components, distinctions between core and auxiliary functions, and the regulatory expectations that guide team roles, documentation, and care delivery. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

## 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Breakout Session (Group H)

### H-1 | “Managing and Documenting the ‘Gray Area’ Patient”

**Kristie Lee Meers, BSN, RN, CHPN, Chief Clinical Officer | Careficient, Inc.** | Not every patient fits neatly into a textbook diagnosis or meets criteria with obvious clarity—and that’s where clinical leadership must shine. In this interactive session, participants will dive into real-world case studies involving patients who fall into the “gray area” of hospice eligibility, symptom burden, and appropriateness. Through guided discussion and peer sharing, attendees will examine how clinical judgment, documentation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and regulatory awareness intersect in complex cases. Walk away with tools to support your teams in navigating ambiguity while maintaining compliance and providing exceptional care. **Audience: Compliance, Nurses, Physicians, Supervisors/Managers/Leaders | Level: Advanced**

### H-2 | “From Hire to Heart: Sustaining Mission-Driven Teams Across Generations”

**Chris Gallarneau, Senior Education Consultant at MAC Legacy, & Michelle Donnell, RN, Managing Director, VNA Hospice** | In today’s evolving workforce, attracting and keeping top talent is more challenging than ever. This engaging session, designed specifically for hospice leaders, offers practical, mission-aligned strategies to recruit, connect with, and retain employees across generations. Discover how to strengthen your hiring process, adapt leadership styles to meet diverse team needs, spot early signs of disengagement, and cultivate a culture where people feel valued and inspired. Leave with actionable tools to build strong, purpose-driven teams who stay committed to the heart of hospice work. **Audience: All | Level: General (Everyone)**

### H-3 | “Transforming Hospice Care: Integrating Case Management, SDOH, and Age-Friendly Care”

**Dr. Jeremy Holloway, Assistant Professor of Health Equity; Founder, Tellegacy Program | New Mexico Highlands University & Tellegacy Program** | This session explores innovative strategies in hospice care by integrating comprehensive case management with an intentional approach to the Social Determinants of Health and the Age-Friendly Health System’s 5Ms—Medication, Mobility, Mentation, Multicomplexity, and What Matters Most. Attendees will learn practical methodologies to enhance psychosocial care, improve transitional outcomes, and strengthen meaningful patient-provider connections. **Audience: All | Level: Intermediate**

### H-4 | “Texas Medicaid Hospice Care”

**Joyce Adekunle, Program Specialist V/Medicaid and CHIP Svcs. Office of Policy | Texas Health & Human Services Commission** | This session provides a comprehensive overview of the Texas Medicaid Hospice Program, including eligibility criteria, required services, and access to acute care while enrolled in hospice. Attendees will learn about the impact of the Affordable Care Act’s concurrent care provision for pediatric members and review key considerations when transitioning beneficiaries to Fee-for-Service (FFS) following hospice election. The session will also cover durable medical equipment (DME) processes specific to hospice, payment and reimbursement procedures, and the importance of establishing clear written agreements for Medicaid hospice room-and-board arrangements. Participants will leave with a practical understanding of regulatory expectations, coordination requirements, and best operational practices to support compliant and effective hospice care within the Texas Medicaid system. **Audience: All | Level: Intermediate**

## CONFERENCE INFORMATION

**Recording Sales:** Most sessions will be audio recorded. Please purchase your 2026 TNMHPO conference recording at the link provided on the registration website.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your request. For any special requests, please contact TNMHPO at [kparker@txnmhospice.org](mailto:kparker@txnmhospice.org) or 512-454-1247 before the meeting dates.

**Consent to Use of Photographic Images:** Registration and attendance at, or participation in, TNMHPO meetings or other activities constitutes an agreement by the registrant to TNMHPO's use and distribution (now and in the future) of the registrant or attendee's image or voice in photographs, videos, electronic reproductions and audio of such events and activities.

**Target Audience:** Hospice Physicians, Nurses, Clinical and Support Staff, Billers, Social Workers, Chaplains, Administrators, Owners, Managers, Volunteer Coordinators, Bereavement Professionals, Aides, and Volunteers.

### **Overview:**

The purpose of this education activity is to enhance the comfort and skills of the General and Hospice and Palliative Care Professional in the area of Interprofessional pain management by addressing skills for working with patients and families with multiple disciplines to serve the patients and families.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- **Apply** evidence-based approaches for common hospice symptoms (e.g., constipation, nausea, pediatric pain, psychiatric comorbidities) to improve patient comfort and safety.
- **Demonstrate** communication techniques that strengthen IDT coordination and family conversations at end of life, with attention to CAHPS/STAR impacts and difficult topics (e.g., aging/consent, childhood grief).
- **Differentiate** Texas HHSC requirements (core vs. non-core, IDT responsibilities).
- **Analyze** Medicare integrity risks (e.g., CAP, OIG/HHSC reviews, program integrity priorities).
- **Strengthen** documentation to support eligibility determinations, levels-of-care decisions, "gray area" cases, and audit readiness.
- **Integrate** HOPE/HQRP expectations into daily workflow and QAPI, using data to drive quality improvement and reporting accuracy.

**Continuing Education for Admin up to 17.25 Hours of CE (5 preconference, 12.25 conference):** Texas & New Mexico Hospice & Palliative Care Organization is an approved provider of continuing education for Hospice Administrators by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

## TNMHPO's 44th Annual Conference – Continuing Education

### Joint Accreditation Statement



In support of improving patient care, this activity has been planned and implemented by Amedco LLC and Texas New Mexico Hospice & Palliative Care Organization. Amedco LLC is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

Amedco Joint Accreditation Provider Number: 4008163

Professions in scope for this activity are listed below.

#### Physicians

Amedco LLC designates this live activity for a maximum of **20.25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits<sup>TM</sup> for physicians.**

Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

#### Nurses

Amedco LLC designates this activity for a **maximum of 20.25 ANCC contact hours.**

#### Social Workers



As a Jointly Accredited Organization, Amedco is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved under this program. State and provincial regulatory boards have the final authority to determine whether an individual

course may be accepted for continuing education credit. Amedco maintains responsibility for this course.

**Social workers completing this course receive up to 20.25 continuing education credits.**

***The following state boards accept courses offering ASWB ACE credit for Social Workers: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NM, NJ, NV, OH, OK\*, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WI, WV\*, WY***

***OK:*** Accepts ASWB ACE for live, in-person activities but not for ethics and/or online courses.

***WV:*** Accepts ASWB ACE unless activity is held live in West Virginia.

***The following state boards accept courses offering ASWB ACE credit for Counselors: AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, MA (LEP ONLY), MD, ME, MO, ND, NE, NM, NH, NV, OK\*, OR, PA, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WY***

***MI:*** No CE requirement for licensed counselors.

***The following state boards accept courses offering ASWB ACE credit for MFTs: AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, FL, IA, ID, IN, KS, MD, ME, MO, NC, NE, NH, NM, NV, OK\*, OR, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WY***

AL MFTs: Credits authorized by NBCC or any other state licensing agency will be accepted. MA MFTs: Participants can self-submit courses not approved by the MAMFT board for review. MI: No CE for requirement for licensed MFTs.

The following state boards accept ASWB ACE credit for Addictions Professionals: AK, CA, CO, CT, GA, IA, IN, KS, LA, MO, MT, ND, NM, NV, OK, OR, SC, WA, WI, WV, WY



**PAY BY CHECK REGISTRATION FORM - TNMHPO Annual Convention – March 4-6, 2026**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Designation (i.e., RN, LVN, MSW, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (required) \_\_\_\_\_

**REGISTRATION FEES**

**\*\*Full Conference Registration for March 5-6, 2026**

*Please circle the option that applies*      Member/ Non-Member

Early Registration (by 1/17/25)      \$450    \$650

Regular Registration (by 1/17/25)      \$475    \$675

Late Registration (after 2/14/25)      \$525    \$725

☐ **Add On: Half Day Social Worker \$50 – must be registered for the full conference to get this pricing!**

☐ **Add On: Half Day Advanced Clinical Preconference \$50 – must be registered for the full conference to get this pricing!**

**One-Day Reg. for ☐Th. or ☐Fr.      \$300 member /\$400 non-member**

☐ **Presenter Discount of \$150.00**

**TOTAL AMOUNT REGISTRATION \_\_\_\_\_**

☐ Check if you require special services to fully participate in the program. Attach a written description of your needs.

Make checks and charges payable to **Texas & New Mexico Hospice Organization. (TNMHPO TAX ID #: 75-1870672) MAIL PAYMENT TO: TNMHPO, 1108 Lavaca, Suite 727, AUSTIN, TX 78701**

If paying by credit card, please register at: <https://www.txnmhospice.org/product/2026-hospice-palliative-conference/>

**Book Accommodations at Kalahari Resort:**

<https://book.passkey.com/event/51126755/owner/50022711/home>

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellations received by email by 5:00 pm on Feb. 1, 2025 will be entitled to a refund, less a \$25 administrative fee. Cancellations after Feb. 1, 2025, and conference “no-shows” forfeit their entire registration fee. Substitutions are welcome. Please advise TNMHO by email if a substitute will be attending in your place. Telephone cancellations CANNOT be accepted. Email: [kparker@txnmhospice.org](mailto:kparker@txnmhospice.org) for substitutions and cancellations.