



**North
Dakota
Long Term Care
ASSOCIATION**

Serving the Full Continuum of Care

NDLTCA Newsletter

February 17, 2026

All Members - *All Members*
Assisted Living - *AL*
Basic Care and Adult Residential - *BC*
Care at Home - *CH*
Home Health - *HH*
Nursing Facilities - *NF*

Thank you to our Platinum Sponsor, HSI for your continued support!



We're looking forward to this upcoming webinar!

All Members

Education

A Whole-Person Approach to Resident Dining & Wellbeing

All Members

March 10th at 2PM EST

Join this free 60-minute educational presentation discussing modern dining and complementary wellbeing practices for long term and post acute care residents. Registration is free to AHCA/NCAL members. A certificate of completion will be issued upon successful viewing with approval from ANFP for 1 CEU for CDM-CFPP's. [Register here](#)

North Dakota Government Update

Rural Health Transformation Program

All Members

North Dakota's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to strengthen rural health care and reduce chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke. We are grateful to collaborate with entities across the state to make this happen.

Program Timeline Rural Health Transformation Program



NORTH Dakota | Health & Human Services

In addition to the above timeline, the interim Rural Health Transformation Committee met in 2025 on Oct. 14-15, Oct. 21, Dec. 4 and in 2026 on Jan. 13-14.

Here's a recap of recent developments:

Gov. Kelly Armstrong convened a special session of the 69th Legislative Assembly, Jan. 21-23, 2026, to accept the \$198,936,969.55 in federal funding awarded to North Dakota to launch the RHTP.

As part of the special session, lawmakers passed four related policy bills:

- Require the Presidential Physical Fitness Test in physical education courses, with criteria and exceptions established by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. House Bill No. 1621
- Allow North Dakota to join the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact. House Bill No. 1622
- Add nutrition education to the continuing education requirements for physicians. Senate Bill No. 2401
- Expand the scope of practice for pharmacists to allow them to order certain laboratory tests and independently prescribe certain medications to patients. Senate Bill No. 2402

Following the special session, North Dakota submitted a final budget to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for approval due to differences between CMS' Notice of Award and the original budget narrative submitted by North Dakota Health and Human Services (ND HHS). The budget was resubmitted to CMS on Jan. 30.

When can you apply for funds?

CMS has until the end of February to approve the revised budget. The State of North Dakota can't release funds until we receive CMS approval.

After CMS approves the budget, ND HHS will begin releasing different funding opportunities in phases. We anticipate the first grant funding opportunity to be released in late February or early March, depending on when we receive CMS approval.

As each funding opportunity becomes available, the application and other materials will be posted on the ND HHS website at hhs.nd.gov/rural-health-transformation.

The RHTP is supported by CMS of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$198,936,969.55 with 100% funded by CMS/US HHS. The contents are those of ND HHS and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/US HHS, or the U.S. Government.

North Dakota's Rural Health Transformation Program

- Application and framework developed from stakeholder feedback
- Special projects and funding opportunities will be used to implement the actions identified in the application

Make ND Healthy Again

- ND Moves Together
- Eat Well North Dakota
- Building Connection and Resiliency
- Investing in Value

Strengthen and Stabilize Rural Health Workforce

- Expand Rural Healthcare Training Pipelines
- Improve Retention in Rural and Tribal Communities
- Use Tech as Extender for Rural Providers
- Provider TA and Training for Existing Workforce

Bring High-Quality Health Care Closer to Home

- Rightsizing Rural Health Care Delivery Systems for the Future
- Coordinating and Connecting Care
- Clinics without Walls
- Sustaining Revenue
- Ensuring Safety Net Service Delivery
- Ensuring Transportation

Connect Tech, Data and Providers for a Stronger ND

- Cooperative Purchasing for Tech and Other Infrastructure
- Breaking Data Barriers
- Harnessing AI and New Tech

Innovate ND Grant Applications - Next Cycle Due February 26

All Members

Innovate ND is a voucher-based reimbursement program designed to help North Dakota entrepreneurs advance their businesses by supporting customer and market research. Each participant may receive up to \$50,000 in reimbursable expenses, administered through the Entrepreneur Centers. The program is divided into two phases, each offering up to \$25,000 in reimbursements. Participants have six months per phase, with a maximum of 12 months to complete the full program.

[Find out more...](#)

Interim Committee Meetings

All Members

Mar. 12 | 9 am | [Administrative Rules Committee](#)

Mar. 24 | 10 am | [Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review Committee](#)

Mar. 25 | 10 am | [Legislative Task Force on Gov. Efficiency](#)

Regulatory

Webinar Regarding Changes to Chapters 5 and 7 of the State Operations Manual

NF

On January 30, CMS released [QSO-26-03-NH](#), outlining significant changes to both Chapters 5 and 7 of the State Operations Manual (SOM). Related to these changes, AHCA has released a [webinar series](#) exploring the recent updates to the SOM. Across four focused sessions, the webinar breaks down the key revisions and offers practical insights to help you navigate the updated requirements. The four parts include the following information:

- **Part 1:** Introduction to the overall updates and a detailed review of the changes made to **Chapter 5**.
- **Part 2:** An overview of the newly added/updated **definitions in Chapter 7**, along with important updates related to **Nursing Waivers** and **Life Safety Code (LSC) Waivers**.
- **Part 3:** A deep dive into the **extensive changes to the survey process**, including what providers can expect moving forward.
- **Part 4:** A review of updates affecting **IJ determinations, IDRs, and CMPs**, including procedural and operational impacts.

This series is designed to equip facilities with the knowledge they need to confidently implement and respond to these regulatory updates. The course is free to members and \$65 for nonmembers. Please send any questions about the webinar to educate@ahca.org and any questions about the webinar content to regulatory@ahca.org.

CMS Updates

NF

[CMS Refreshes QCOR Reports Following Transition to iQIES](#)

CMS recently refreshed the Quality, Certification, and Oversight Reports (QCOR) on the S&C QCOR Home website. [Read More](#)

[CMS Postpones January Care Compare Refresh to February 5th](#)

To ensure data accuracy and quality, CMS will be postponing the January refresh of Nursing Home Care Compare to February 5, 2026. [Read More](#)

[New CMS Resource Available on the Impact of Combined MDS Assessment on SNF QRP Compliance](#)

This one-page resource for SNF providers illustrates how Medicare 5-Day and PPS Discharge combined assessments can impact a facility's Annual Medicare Payment Update (APU) calculation. [Read More](#)

[CMS Releases Update on Medicare Advantage RADV Audit Plans](#)

CMS has released an update on the status of Medicare Advantage Risk Adjustment Data Validation (RADV) audits, reaffirming that strengthening oversight and improving payment accuracy remain top priorities. [Read more.](#)

[CMS Posts Update to Nursing Home Critical Element Pathways](#)

CMS recently posted an updated Survey Resource folder, which included updates to several Critical Element Pathways. [Read More](#)

[CMS Posts NOFO For Nursing Home Staffing Campaign](#)

Recently, CMS posted an updated Notice of Funding Opportunity related to the CMS Nursing Home Staffing Campaign. [Read More](#)

AHCA/NCAL

AHCA/NCAL Supports the Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act

All Members

AHCA/NCAL has endorsed the [Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act \(H.R. 5621\)](#), which would add licensed physical therapists to the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program, helping recruit and retain highly trained professionals in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). It would also make physical therapy services more accessible for patients living in rural and underserved areas of the country. Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-VA) and Rep. Diane DeGette (D-CO) re-introduced this bipartisan bill. You can read more about it on Rep. DeGette's [page](#). Read more...

National Alliance for Care at Home Update

The Alliance is welcoming a new CEO!

CH

Welcome to Jennifer Sheets, RN, MSN, MBA! She shared in a recent update:

I'm honored to step into this role as CEO of the National Alliance for Care at Home, and I want to share what this moment means to me and what you can expect in the months ahead.

Before anything else, I want to recognize the work already underway. The Alliance team has built meaningful momentum and a strong foundation on behalf of the care at home community. My role is to build upon that work and sharpen our impact together.

I've spent nearly 25 years in this field, starting as an ICU nurse, building and leading

organizations, advocating in Washington, and most recently, founding a technology company focused on solving real problems for people delivering and receiving care at home. Every role has deepened my conviction that what we do matters profoundly. The care we provide changes lives, restores dignity, and keeps families together. And it represents the future of how healthcare should work in this country.

That's why I'm here. Not just because I believe in this mission, but because I've lived it alongside you and I know how important it is that we at the National Alliance for Care at Home get this right.

[Read more...](#)

CMS Updates ACCESS Model FAQs and Payment Information

CH

The CMS innovation Center (CMMI) has issued additional updates on the Advancing Chronic Care with Effective, Scalable Solutions (ACCESS) Model. These updates include:

- Pledge by Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, and private health insurance plans to adopt outcomes-based payment arrangements aligned with the ACCESS Model
- [Updated FAQs, with guidance on technical questions raised](#)
- [Model payment amounts and performance targets](#)

[Read more...](#)

Workforce

New Ruling on Temporary Protective Status

All Members

You may have seen [in the news](#) a new ruling on TPS that came about yesterday. Below is an explainer of what this means that an immigration related group I work with shared -- and thought you might find helpful. **This is not legal advice.**

1. What Just Happened?

The Ninth Circuit granted a **stay (pause)** on a lower court's order that had previously protected TPS designations for **Nepal, Honduras, and Nicaragua**.

- **The Result:** The government is now legally cleared to proceed with terminating TPS for these three countries while the appeal moves forward. The next step is for the government to put out a notice in the Federal Register, which is the actual guidance employers should go by.

2. Which Employees are Impacted?

The impact differs significantly by the employee's country of origin:

- **Nepal, Honduras, and Nicaragua:** DHS will likely now enforce termination dates. This means
- **Haiti:** TPS protections for Haiti remain **temporarily active**. A separate federal court in D.C. blocked the termination of Haiti TPS on February 2, 2026, preserving work authorization for now. **Venezuela:** Termination remains **in effect**. While the Ninth Circuit recently ruled against the government's method of termination, a **U.S. Supreme Court stay** keeps the program's end in place.

3. What Can Employers Expect?

Potential Scenario	Employer Guidance
I-9 Reverification	Do not reverify early. Employers should only reverify employees when their current work authorization truly expires. Blanket reverification based on "news reports" can lead to national origin discrimination claims.
Legal Documentation	Employees may present Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) with past dates that have been automatically extended by federal notices. Check official USCIS updates before making employment decisions.

4. Action Steps for Management

- **Audit, Don't Assume:** Review your EAD-based employees to identify work permits expiration date. Do not assume someone is ineligible to work solely because of their nationality or accent.
- **Stay Documented:** Retain a PDF or printout of the relevant **USCIS web page** or court order in the employee's I-9 file to justify continued employment during litigation.
- **Seek Alternatives:** For essential workers whose TPS may end, evaluate backup options such as family-based petitions or other legal pathways.

Congress moves to institute its own LTC staffing rule, force spending on workforce

NF

MCKNIGHTS Feb. 12, 2026

A group of seven Democratic senators is introducing legislation backing a new nursing home staffing rule that imposes similar standards as those included in repealed federal regulations

[Read more ...](#)

[And a SKILLED NURSING NEWS article](#)



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