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December 14th, 2023

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Headlines

[2023's Most Impactful Hospice Regulatory Moves](#)

Hospice News

December 12, 2023

Program integrity issues that have heated up in the hospice space during the past five years reached a boiling point in 2023. Hospice providers have seen an array of increased regulatory oversight in 2023. That momentum has been fueled by two main concerns among regulators—risks of patient safety and evidence of malfeasance in the space. Hospice News sat down with providers, advocacy groups, legal experts and other stakeholders to uncover the most significant hospice regulatory trends from this year and their anticipated impacts heading into 2024 and beyond. ...

Editor's Note: Quoted in the article, Jason Wallace, partner in health care, Barnes & Thornburg LLP;

Ben Marcantonio, COO and interim CEO, NHPCO; Carrie Uebel, senior vice president and chief ethics and compliance officer, Compassus

Hospice Provider News

[Compassus Looking For More AI Use Cases, Risk-Bearing Partners In Near-Term Future](#)

Home Health Care News

December 12, 2023

As artificial intelligence becomes more applicable in health care, home-based care providers are finally diving into use cases that may work for them. The Brentwood, Tennessee-based Compassus is a prime example of that. A forward-thinking provider, it has been utilizing RPM and telehealth for years, even prior to COVID-19. Now, it's looking at ways it can fit AI into its operations.

[Sunset Hospice Cottage faces staffing shortage, temporary closure](#)

The Globe (Worthington, MN)

December 12, 2023

Worthington, MN—The Sunset Hospice Cottage has announced a temporary closure due to acute staffing shortages, an unfortunate side effect of the broader healthcare staffing crisis impacting rural America. Sunset Hospice Cottage has provided comfortable living for Worthington residents nearing the end of life since 2003, but now, due to an unprecedented shortage of healthcare workers, the cottage is forced to close its doors for the first time in 20 years.



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[Kaiser Permanente lays off 115 IT employees](#)

Modern Healthcare

December 12, 2023

Kaiser Permanente has joined a growing list of health systems cutting back their IT teams. The Oakland, California-based health system confirmed it eliminated 115 workers from IT positions last month. Kaiser declined to specify how many IT employees were retained or provide detail about the roles and locations affected. Overall, Kaiser has about 220,000 employees.

Clinical News

[Moving through the holidays with grief—crafting a plan can help](#)

Morgan Messenger (Berkeley Springs, WV)

December 12, 2023

Christmas and winter holidays are portrayed as festive, bright and jolly times to celebrate and enjoy life. But the holidays can look and feel different for someone who has lost a loved one, is in the midst of major illness, or for someone who has suffered a traumatic event that's brought significant change to their lives. Navigating the balance between celebration and grief is unique for everyone. Grief Counselor Deanna Rudy of Hospice of the Panhandle said acknowledging the change in life is an important step in making this holiday season manageable for families.

[Letters of Love—Nonprofit provides emotional support for children in hospitals](#)

WCCO-TV (Minneapolis, MN)

December 11, 2023

Orono, MN—It's the time of year for giving and a Minnesotan is doing so on a scale so large, it can't be measured. It's a mission one woman started after her greatest gift was

taken away. Grace Berbig grew up with so much love, but also a lot of pain. When she was 10, her mother was diagnosed with leukemia and eventually lost her battle with the disease.

Editor's Note: Click the title to read more of this inspirational story.



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Regulatory News

[Home Health Industry Leaders Scoff At 'Distorted Picture of Reality' Painted By MedPAC](#)

Home Health Care News

December 12, 2023

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission recommended that the Medicare base payment rate for home health care be reduced by 7% for CY 2025. The recommendation is another chapter in the contentious relationship between the commission and the home health industry. It also recommended that Congress eliminate any payment updates for hospice providers in 2025.

[US Supreme Court refuses to hear fraud appeal for South Florida health care executive pardoned by Trump](#)

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

December 11, 2023

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday refused to take up an appeal by a South Florida nursing-home operator whose 20-year prison sentence was commuted by former President Donald Trump after being convicted in what prosecutors called a "massive health care fraud scheme." The Supreme Court rejected a petition by attorneys for Philip Esformes, who was found guilty in 2019 on 20 counts related to kickbacks, money laundering, obstruction of justice and conspiracy, according to court documents.

Mergers & Aquisition News

[Long-term care deal volume down as 2024 approaches](#)

McKnight's Senior Living

December 13, 2023

As long-term care operators prepare for 2024, the volume of senior living and care deals is down, Paul Branin, vice president of business development at management and consulting

firm Health Dimensions Group, said Tuesday. He was one of the experts who during a webinar shared predictions of trends that will shape aging services providers in the coming year.

[Thrice-rebuffed suitor StoneBridge Healthcare is once again involved in a bid to buy Tower Health](#)

Philadelphia Business Journal

December 12, 2023

Bucks County-based hospital turnaround firm StoneBridge Healthcare is taking yet another stab at Tower Health, this time potentially entering into a management contract with an affiliated nonprofit organization that is interested in acquiring the Berks County health system. The nonprofit, called WoodBridge Inc., was expected to send Tower Health a non-binding agreement in principle Tuesday morning under which it would purchase substantially all of Tower's assets for \$706 million.

[UC San Diego Health Completes \\$200 Million Purchase of Alvarado Hospital](#)

San Diego Union-Tribune

December 12, 2023

UC San Diego Health Monday completed the purchase of Alvarado Hospital Medical Center from Prime Healthcare, adding the 302-bed medical facility to its network of clinics and hospitals. ... The university hospital system purchased Alvarado Hospital for \$200 million.

[University of Kansas deal with Missouri hospital feels 'terribly wrong' to lawmakers](#)

Missouri Independent

December 11, 2023

The proposed takeover of Liberty Hospital in Missouri by the University of Kansas Health System is being greeted with scorn by lawmakers from both sides of the state line and both political parties. Leading the charge against the takeover in Missouri is Kansas City Democratic state Sen. Greg Razer, who said the idea of KU owning a hospital in suburban Missouri is "terribly wrong." "There are boundaries for a reason, and they've crossed one," said Razer, a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia.

[The Vistria Group, Centerbridge Partners Reportedly Weighing Help at Home Sale](#)

Home Health Care News

December 12, 2023

The Vistria Group and Centerbridge Partners are "weighing options" around the future of Help at Home, including a potential sale. *Bloomberg* first reported the news late Tuesday, citing "people with knowledge of the matter." Based in Chicago, Help at Home is one of the largest providers of home- and community-based services in the country. It has more than 180 branch locations across 11 states, and provides care to more than 66,000 people via its 53,000 caregivers.

Post-Acute Care News

[Fitch downgrades Butler Health System's bond debt](#)

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

December 12, 2023

Butler Health System's financial challenges continued Monday with a ratings downgrade of its bond debt. Fitch Ratings issued a one-notch downgrade to 'BBB-', outlook negative, because of accelerating losses and a "weaker than budgeted operating loss" of \$12.97 million for the three months ending Sept. 30, up from a \$1.6 million loss posted for the same quarter in 2022. BHS, a subsidiary of Independence Health System, is seeking a waiver from a debt service coverage requirement from bondholders, which otherwise could lead to a default.

[Repositioning Nursing Homes For Acuity, More Closures, Less Deal Making Expected in 2024](#)

Skilled Nursing News

December 12, 2023

As the skilled nursing industry heads toward a new year with continued labor shortages and reimbursement gaps, service repositioning and closures among operators are expected trends for the space. And although there are signs of positivity in the form of increased Medicaid reimbursement in some states, extensive rural closures are creating "nursing home deserts" and up to 450,000 nursing home residents are still at risk of displacement without a sufficient workforce.

[Report spots care planning gaps for nursing home residents](#)

McKnight's Long Term Care News

December 12, 2023

A new report looks at what's working to help residents in long-term care communities prioritize care planning and advanced care planning, or ACP. The study was published on Dec. 6 in *The Journal of Long-Term Care*. Researchers set out to look at studies and surveys on care planning interventions for older adults in long-term care communities. The team wanted to understand what types of programs are being used to drive better care planning overall

Technology / Innovations News

[VyncaCare CEO Schulte—Redesign Serious Illness Care for Patients' Changing Needs](#)

Hospice News

December 12, 2023

The needs of today's seriously ill patients necessitates the development of new, longitudinal care models that integrate the patient-centered principles of hospice and palliative care, Dr. Darren Schulte, CEO of VyncaCare, told *Hospice News*. Vynca launched as

an advance care planning technology platform and expanded into the palliative care provider space through its 2021 acquisition of California-based Resolution Care.

General News

[Bucket list art show being held for hospice patient in Tabor City](#)

WWAY-TV (Wilmington, NC)

December 12, 2023

Tabor City, NC—A very special art show is taking place next week in Columbus County. Lower Cape Fear LifeCare is helping one of its patients fulfill her bucket wish list of holding an art show. Susan Sapinsley worked as a graphic artist and journalist throughout her life and wants the opportunity to share her life's work during a showing of her work.

[A Wish Come True—8-year-old in hospice goal surpassed by 10,000 cards and gifts](#)

WEWS-TV (Cleveland, OH)

December 12, 2023

Conesville, OH—Last week, we talked about a little boy in hospice who wished for 2,000 birthday and Christmas cards; after that, so many of you reached out, wanting to know an update! ... They got more than 13,000 cards and gifts from across the nation. On Tuesday, UPS picked up the packages and cards from the Community Hospice center and hand-delivered them to Andrew's home where he was overwhelmed and in shock at how much there was. The boxes filled their kitchen, barely leaving standing room, but more importantly, they brought Andrew the holiday joy he needed.

[Center for Hospice Care a Giving Tree Partner for Wellfield Gardens' Winter Wonderland Holiday Lights](#)

Valpo Life (Valparaiso, IN)

December 12, 2023

Elkhart, IN—Wellfield Botanic Gardens' Winter Wonderland Holiday Lights transports visitors to a magical setting with lights, sound and beauty, perfect for families to enjoy during the holiday season. Enjoy this special opportunity to see Wellfield after hours in a wintry paradise. Each year, local nonprofit organizations are chosen to have a "Giving Tree" at the Winter Wonderland and Center for Hospice Care is honored to be chosen again for 2023.

[Palliative Care Yield Cost Savings Lymphoma Patients, But Racial Disparities Exist](#)

Palliative Care News

December 12, 2023

Lymphoma patients who receive palliative care have fewer hospitalizations than those who do not, but racial and ethnic disparities persist. ... The study found that on average palliative care generated cost savings of \$24,269 per patient. However, patients that identified as Black or Hispanic were much less likely to receive palliative care than white

patients, reflecting widespread inequities in palliative care and the health care system at large, the research found.

[WelbeHealth Opens First Bay Area PACE Center Serving Vulnerable Seniors in San Jose](#)

PRNewswire

December 12, 2023

San Jose, CA—Today, the physician-led senior health services provider WelbeHealth, in partnership with Northern California-based health care system Sutter Health, announced the opening of a new Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) center in San Jose. The new center will provide essential health care and wrap-around services to diverse low-income older adults. ... Over 4,000 PACE eligible seniors reside within 15 miles of the San Jose location, and the population of these seniors is anticipated to increase.

[Workers set to strike at 4 Prime hospitals](#)

Becker's Hospital Review

December 11, 2023 Members of the Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West are set to launch a five-day strike Dec. 20 affecting four Prime Healthcare facilities in Southern California. The union represents about 1,800 workers ... Union members, which include emergency room technicians, licensed vocational nurses, certified nursing assistants, radiology technicians, medical assistants, respiratory technicians, and others, voted to authorize a strike earlier this year.

[Nurses' union renews push for safe staffing levels in Maine hospitals](#)

Maine Beacon

December 12, 2023

The Maine State Nurses Association, the state's largest nursing union, has renewed its legislative campaign in support of a bill to address unsafe staffing levels at Maine hospitals. The Maine Quality Care Act, a bill sponsored by Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland) that would establish minimum staffing requirements based on patient needs, will be one of the top labor proposals that lawmakers will consider when a new legislative session begins early next year.

[Assaults on healthcare workers now carry enhanced criminal fines](#)

McKnight's Senior Living

December 12, 2023

Michigan is the latest state to codify protections for healthcare workers assaulted on the job, which one senior living association said will positively impact the state's workforce shortage problem. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI) recently signed into law two bills that create enhanced criminal fines for assaults, aggravated assaults and assaults with a deadly weapon against health professionals or volunteers while on the job. ... In signing the bills, Whitmer said healthcare workers face "rising rates of bullying, viciousness and violence."

[New bill would overhaul nation's workforce training and development system](#)

McKnight's Senior Living

December 12, 2023

Reps. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Bobby Scott (D-VA), chair and ranking member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, respectively, recently introduced legislation aimed at overhauling the nation's workforce training and development system. ...

According to a fact sheet released in conjunction with the legislation, the bill would dedicate 50% of the adult and dislocated worker funding towards upskilling workers, emphasized employer-led initiatives that equip workers with the skill sets to fill jobs in critical industries and provide "robust skill development services" to workers displaced from their jobs through no fault of their own.

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Today's Encouragement

"Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things." Robert Brault

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