

## **CMS Open Door Forum Updates for Home Health, Hospice**

Source: NAHC-NHPCO Alliance, August 8, 2024

### **Home Health**

CMS announced a transition for the home health grouper software.

The current version of Home Health (HH) Grouper uses Java software and is currently based on Java version 8. Support for Java version 8 will end by November 2026. Home health agencies and their software vendors who implement the HH Grouper in a mainframe environment will be impacted by this change. CMS is preparing now to convert the programs to Java version 17.

For the upcoming year, the October 2024 update and subsequent quarterly releases of the HH Grouper will include two Common Business-Oriented Language (COBOL) Java bridge modules instead of the one that is currently delivered. CMS will continue to provide the existing bridge module that utilizes the 31-bit, Java 8 Java Virtual Machine (JVM) environment. CMS will also provide a new bridge module that will utilize the 64-bit, Java 17 JVM. The Java jar file for each will continue to be compiled using Java 8. This will preserve backwards compatibility with all existing mainframe deployments (both batch and Customer Information Control System (CICS)). The installation guides for the program will provide notice of the changes. This will allow users to test upgrades to their systems over the next year to prepare to move to Java 17.

The release of the HH Grouper effective October 2025, will be compiled with Java 17 and only the Java 17, 64-bit COBOL calling module will be delivered. Providers and their software vendors should begin planning this year to ensure they are prepared for this conversion next fall.

Questions about the Java 17 conversion can be sent at any time to the resource mailbox [HHGrouperQuestions@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:HHGrouperQuestions@cms.hhs.gov).

### **Home Health Value Based Purchasing Program**

The preliminary July interim performance reports (IPRs) were uploaded to folders on July 22, 2024. The IPRs use the most current 12 months of the data available and final IPRs override preliminary IPRs. CMS encouraged HHAs to access these reports. Download statistics show approximately 70 percent of HHA July IPRs have not been accessed. If there's any feedback that CMS could use to improve access to the reports, they would like to hear from providers. The July IPRs contains an extra tab that includes the benchmark and achievement thresholds for the measure set that will count in calendar year 2025.

The first annual performance report (APR) for the expanded model will be posted in the end of August. This report will include your annual total performance score for calendar year 2023 and associated payment adjustment that will be applied to all Medicare fee for service claims submitted for home health services with dates in 2025. The information that will be publicly reported starting in January, 2025.

On August 13, 2024, CMS will provide a webinar that walks through this report. Registration for the webinar can be found on the Expanded HHVBP [website](#).

Finally if you're not receiving e-mail announcements from CMS about the model, go to the [webpage](#) and join the listserv.

### **Home Health Quality Reporting Program**

The calendar year 2025 Home Health Prospective Payment System notice of proposed rulemaking was published on June 26, 2024. Public comments can be submitted electronically through

[https:// www regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). The comment period is open for 60 days after the proposed rule is published.

The July preview reports for the October refresh were made available in IQIES on July 17, 2024. CMS reminded participants that the preview reports now include the addition of the number of episodes and the numerator for each measure score in addition to the number of episodes in a denominator.

The October 2024 refresh includes the removal of two claims based measures from public reporting. The first one is acute care hospitalization during the first 60 days of home health or ACH and the second one is the emergency department use without hospitalization during the first 60 days of home health or ED. Due to the removal of the ACH measure from public reporting, the October 2024 refresh also contains an update to the home health Star Rating reports. The home health within stay potentially preventable hospitalization or PPH measure will replace ACH in the star rating calculations. The home health QRP web page has been updated to reflect upcoming changes. Updated documents that reflect the upcoming changes are also available in the download section of that web page. Measure results for new discharge functions for quality measure are now available on the IQIES reports. This is to be publicly reported in January 2025.

The Outcome and Assessment Information Set (OASIS) quarterly Q&As for July 2024 were posted on the QTSO website on July 12, 2024

### **Hospice Quality Reporting Program**

On July 30, 2024, CMS issued a final rule that provides updates to the fiscal year 2025 Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP). This rule finalizes new HQRP quality measures; finalizes a new data collection instrument, the Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation (HOPE); summarizes responses to a request for information regarding potential social determinants of health (SDOH) elements; and provides updates on Health Equity activities, future quality measures, and public reporting requirements. The rule also finalizes changes to the Hospice Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (Hospice CAHPS) Survey.

There are several new or updated resources that will be available on the hospice QRP website. The HOPE guidance manual including each HOPE time point will be posted this month. CMS encourages hospice providers to visit the [HQRP](#) page for more information. A web-based training introducing the HOPE tool can be found on the HQRP training and education [webpage](#).