Empowering Home Care Professionals through Education

By: Naomi Cotrone, Vice President

The Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care is proud to continue its collaboration with the New England Home Care & Hospice Education Collaborative. This collaborative is a regional alliance of state home care and hospice associations across New England committed to delivering targeted educational programming that meets the evolving needs of our workforce. Through this partnership, Rhode Island's home care providers gain access to high-impact training opportunities that build leadership capacity, strengthen care delivery and prepare agencies for the changing regulatory and financial landscape.

This Fall, the Collaborative will host the New England Financial Management Conference on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Beechwood Hotel in Worcester, Massachusetts. This one-day conference will convene some of the brightest minds in the business to help you plan your course to financial success into 2026 and beyond. Attendance is ideal for all staff with responsibilities including fiscal and operational management.

Later in the year, the Home Care Symposium for Private Care Providers will take place on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, also at the Beechwood Hotel in Worcester, Massachusetts from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This event will delve into the transformative developments in care and payment models reshaping the private home care landscape in the coming decade.

Looking ahead to next spring, the New England Home Care & Hospice Conference and Trade Show is scheduled for May 4–6, 2026, at the DoubleTree Hotel and Conference Center in Manchester, New Hampshire. This multi-day conference brings together leaders, clinicians and innovators from across New England to share best practices, explore policy updates and build collaborative strategies for the future of home care and hospice.

In addition to these regional opportunities, the Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care invites you to join us for a special celebration during our 35th Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 11, 2025 from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Chelo's Banquet Room, 2225 Post Road in Warwick, Rhode Island. This event will be a joyful occasion to honor our members and supporters, reflect on 35 years of advancing quality healthcare at home and look ahead to the future. Enjoy an evening of connection, delicious refreshments and live entertainment by Kalifornia Karl. Come raise a glass to the impact we have made and the next chapter we are ready to begin together.

As the home care landscape continues to evolve, especially in Rhode Island, opportunities for continued learning and collaboration are essential. These upcoming events ensure that Rhode Island's home care providers have access to timely, high-quality education that empowers staff at all levels from direct care to senior leadership. Let's continue to learn, lead and grow together!

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SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care

Advancing quality healthcare at home

Home Care Industry Impact

Prioritizing Regulatory Compliance as Department of Health Ramps Up Site Visits

By: Bethany Skinner, President

During the June 12, 2025 Quarterly Membership Meeting, the Rhode Island Department of Health's Center for Health Facilities Regulation (CHFR) delivered a critical presentation exclusively for members of the Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care focused on regulatory oversight, compliance expectations and recent survey trends for licensed home care and home nursing care providers. The session featured Diane Pelletier, MSW, Chief, Robin Cruz, BSN, Senior Nurse Care Evaluator and Lori Levine, BSW, LNHA, Health Facility Compliance Specialist II.

The CHFR team reaffirmed its authority to inspect licensed agencies at any time and emphasized that their survey teams have 24/7 access to provider offices and full access to all records and documentation. Providers were encouraged to cooperate transparently and promptly during these surveys. The Partnership's members were provided with tools and resources on site visit readiness and on post-survey compliance demonstration, which includes adequately developing and addressing plans of correction.

Survey results over the past eighteen months were a wake-up call to all home care and home nursing care providers in attendance. Examples included 23 home care agency surveys were conducted resulting in all 23 receiving citations with a range of 5 to 25 citations per agency and 18 home nursing care provider surveys were conducted resulting in 16 of the 18 receiving up to 27 citations. The most frequently cited deficiencies included issues with clinical records, care plans, supervisory visits, documentation accuracy and client rights. Specifics on how to address each deficiency and move toward compliance was provided during the meeting. The CHFR team emphasized the escalating penalties for continued and repeat non-compliance including G.L. § 23-1-25 allows for criminal penalties up to $300.00 per day and/or jail time for each violation and G.L. § 23-17.10-7 allows for administrative penalties up to $5,000.00 plus interest per violation per day. Additionally, CHFR may issue compliance orders or revoke a provider's license for persistent violations.

The presenters closed with a reminder that their goal is not punitive, rather to ensure patient safety and regulatory integrity. Providers are encouraged to reach out proactively to The Partnership with questions on accessing tools and resources available as a member benefit to strengthen program integrity and regulatory compliance. Additionally, providers were encouraged to use the upcoming Rhode Island Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) social and human service program rate review process as an opportunity to align quality and funding priorities, especially for state-funded programs, such as Medicaid-contracted home and community-based services and supports.

For any questions regarding this meeting or upcoming compliance expectations, members should contact The Partnership's office.

2026 State Budget Enacted

By: Nicholas Oliver, MPA, CAE
Executive Director

After a grueling legislative session and facing great uncertainty as to the future of funding of many programs that are subsidized by the federal government, the Rhode Island General Assembly (state legislature) passed its state fiscal year 2026 budget effective July 1, 2025.

Several items within the proposed budget directly affect the home care provider community:

- **Behavioral Health Rate Enhancement Maintained:** Article 8 retained the Medicaid Program's behavioral health rate enhancement for licensed nurse assistants (CNAs) and homemakers. However, it did not include funding to continue the associated 30-hour paraprofessional workforce training program at Rhode Island College (RIC).

- **Sunsetting of Medicaid Home Care Cost Inflation Factor (CIF):** Article 8 sunsetted the statutory Medicaid-contracted home care annual cost inflation factor (CIF), commonly referred to as a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective July 1, 2025. This change, first proposed by Governor McKee, ends the automatic annual rate increases based on inflation. Notably, it was previously announced by Medicaid Program Director Kristin Pono Sousa during the May 2025 Revenue and Caseload Estimating Conference that the CIF increase for SFY26 would have been 7.61%.

- **Certificate of Need (CoN) Process Preserved:** The budget excludes the Governor Daniel McKee (D-RI) proposal to eliminate the Certificate of Need (CoN) requirement for home care, home nursing care and hospice provider licensure, which was included in Article 10 of his original SFY26 proposal. Thus, the CoN process will remain unchanged.

While this budget may not feel like a win for the home care industry, it is important to recognize that the General Assembly faced a projected $250+ million deficit in crafting the SFY26 budget. Under these conditions, the preservation of certain funding and processes should be viewed as a strategic hold rather than a loss.

Last year, Governor McKee proposed extending the OHIC rate review process for providers to once every four years. However, the SFY26 budget ensures that Medicaid-contracted home care services will remain part of OHIC's biennial rate review process. According to House Fiscal Policy Advisor Sharon Reynolds Ferland's summary presentation on the SFY26 budget on June 10, 2025, the OHIC process will serve as our next major opportunity to advocate for a meaningful rate increase for both skilled and personal care/homemaking services. The OHIC report is due to the General Assembly by September 1, 2025, with recommendations for inclusion in the SFY27 budget effective July 1, 2026.

Thank you to all of our members that engaged in advocacy throughout this legislative session. Your efforts as leaders in home care remain critical in preserving and advancing the priorities of our industry.

The Partnership Calls on EOHHS to Make Investments in Rural Health

By: Nicholas Oliver, MPA, CAE
Executive Director

Following the passage of H.R. 1—the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act"—the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) convened the new Federal Compliance Advisory Group on July 29, 2025. Established through the State Fiscal Year 2026 Budget, the group is charged with reviewing the potential impacts of federal changes on Rhode Island's Medicaid Program and related services. It will also develop policy and program recommendations for administrative or state legislative action.

Chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Charest, the group includes key agency leaders and stakeholders across healthcare and human services, including myself on behalf of the home care, home health and hospice industry. While its primary focus is Medicaid, the group will also assess impacts on programs such as SNAP and HealthSource RI. A final report is due to the Governor, House Speaker, and Senate President by October 31, 2025.

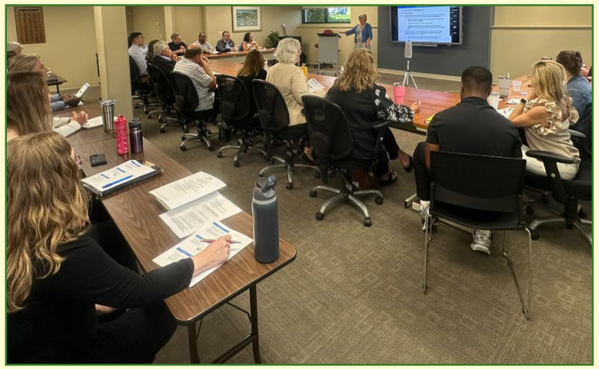
Immediately following the meeting, I submitted a formal letter to Secretary Charest urging EOHHS to apply for federal funding under Section 71401 of H.R. 1—specifically through the Rural Health Transformation Program. The letter highlights longstanding access barriers to home care services in Rhode Island's hard-to-staff areas, including Washington County, northern Providence County, Kent County and the East Bay. These "rural-like" areas are recognized by the Rhode Island Department of Health's Office of Primary Care and Rural Health as underserved for home care services.

Our proposal requests developing a Medicaid rural add-on or rate modifier to better support home care provider companies and their staff working in these underserved regions. This would help offset high travel costs and staffing shortages that often delay service delivery to Medicaid beneficiaries in less densely populated areas. This proposal aligns with the goals of the federal Rural Health Transformation Fund—a $50 billion, five-year grant program designed to modernize rural health infrastructure, advance health equity and strengthen home and community-based services nationwide. Key benefits of the proposed rural add-on include improved access to home care in underserved zip codes, increased workforce retention among direct care staff burdened by travel demands and overall cost savings through reduced institutional placements and maintaining high quality home care services and supports to all those in need regardless of where they live.

EOHHS has until December 31, 2025 to apply for these federal funds. The Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care and its members, as leaders within Rhode Island's home care, health and hospice industry, stands ready to collaborate with our state government partners to ensure home care is prioritized in any rural health transformation planning.

quarterly membership meeting **photos**

On June 12, 2025, The Partnership's Quarterly Membership Meeting included a presentation from Diane Pelletier, MSW, Chief of the Rhode Island Department of Health's Center for Health Facilities Regulation on "Top Deficiencies Identified During Site Visits".



Understanding Rhode Island's New Medicaid Home Care Regulations

By: Bethany Skinner, President

On July 23, 2025, the Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), co-hosted an in-depth webinar to walk Medicaid-contracted home care provider administrators and their staff through the recently implemented Medicaid Program regulations under 210-RICR-20-05-1. These changes, which became effective on June 3, 2025, were developed to codify existing policy, clarify provider expectations and strengthen the home care delivery system for Medicaid beneficiaries.

The webinar focused on major areas of the regulation, including provider eligibility, reimbursement structures, electronic visit verification (EVV), prior authorization requirements and expectations for plans of care. These key updates discussed during the session codified existing rules, clarified staff assignments, implemented pass-through requirements, defined service scopes and allows for transparency and accountability for quality assurance and audit compliance.

These regulations represent a pivotal moment in our shared mission to deliver high-quality, community-based care services in the home. They formalize critical clinical practices, uphold care standards and ensure that the Medicaid reimbursement system effectively supports the professionals and paraprofessionals at the heart of home care delivery.

The Rhode Island Partnership for Home Care thanks the leadership at EOHHS for their collaboration and transparency during the development and rollout of these new regulations. Together, we remain committed to ensuring that every Rhode Islander in need of home care services receives safe, reliable and person-centered care. This is true for those within and outside of the state's Medicaid Program.

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Would you like for your company to be recognized as a leader in home care? Contact Nicholas Oliver at (401) 351-1010 to learn how.