Midwest Quality Update

Improving Care from Alaska to Missouri

Fall 2026



In a rapidly changing healthcare environment, we provide resources, training, and updates to support quality improvement across care settings.

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Emergency Preparedness Spotlight: System, Staff, and Spirit

Recovery starts before the disaster is over.

At the Washington Health Care Association (WHCA) Fall Conference in Spokane, Washington, this month, emergency preparedness experts from the Midwest QIN-QIO offered a two-part session that took a comprehensive look at disaster management. From "we survived" to "we are recovering," the sessions wove together emergency preparedness, quality improvement, workforce resilience strategies, and person-centered resident care to support nursing homes but are applicable to other healthcare settings.

Strengthening the System

Resilient organizations do more than respond to emergencies. They continuously improve the systems that support preparedness and recovery. During the sessions, the QIN-QIO's Emergency Preparedness Subject Matter Expert Brian Feist took the lead in highlighting the importance of strong communication, incident command processes, community partnerships, and ongoing testing of emergency plans.

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Participants learned how after-action reviews, root cause analyses (RCAs), hot washes, and plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles help organizations identify gaps and improve. From evaluating transportation and evacuation plans to strengthening vendor agreements, these types of activities help make sure systems are ready to support residents, staff, and operations when the unexpected happens.



Supporting the Staff

Recovery depends on people. During an emergency, organizations need to support resilience in their workforce by considering factors like fatigue, family responsibilities, transportation challenges, and emotional stress. Healthcare Workforce Program Specialist Meredith Koob reminded participants that emergency preparedness plans should account for workforce needs and challenges.

Practical team tools such as briefs, huddles, and assessments; sustainable staffing strategies, opportunities for rest, and support for employee well-being are critical to workforce resilience. The session also highlighted resources like Circle Talk, which fosters connection, mindfulness, and shared support among staff.



Sustaining the Spirit

Disasters impact the mental and emotional well-being of residents, their families, and their caregivers. Amber Rogers serves as the Midwest QIN-QIO's behavioral health subject matter expert and highlighted the importance of recognizing the stress, anxiety, grief, and fear that attach to emergencies, evacuations, disruptions in routines, and loss.

Long-term residents with dementia or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be especially vulnerable to acting out, withdrawal, wandering, refusing care, or increased fall risk. Presenters encouraged organizations to use person-centered approaches like reflective listening, getting back to familiar routines as possible, and documenting individualized coping strategies in residents' care plans.



Bringing It All Together

While each presenter focused on one of the three S's (system, staff, and spirit), the overarching theme of the two sessions was the integration of the three, as each speaker built on the others' messages, ideas, tools, and resources. During both sessions, the Midwest QIN-QIO team also recognized participants in the room that have had to evacuate their facilities because of an emergency – including those who had to flee the devastating Spokane wildfires in August. The fires forced about 65,000 people to evacuate, including inpatients and long-term care residents. Session attendees shared their stories and lessons learned as well as tips for supporting staff and spirit. One team talked about welcoming their residents' back to their facility in phases to celebrate each group as people came through the doors, a party that was meant for the residents but bolstered the staff as well.

The shared expertise and lived experience in the room served as a reminder that emergency preparedness means more than responding to a crisis. Planning must include building systems, supporting people, and sustaining spirit to respond, recover, adapt, and continuously improve while ensuring safe, high-quality care for residents and staff. To learn more about the topics covered at the Washington Health Care Association (WHCA) Fall Conference, please contact Nina Sanderson at nsanderson@mountainpacific.org.

Interested in learning about emergency preparedness and upcoming education opportunities? Visit midwestcmsqinqio.com or send us an email contact@midwestcmsqinqio.com.

Advancing Healthcare Quality Through Technology (AHQT)



As part of Midwest QIN-QIO's commitment to enhancing healthcare quality, patient safety, and equitable outcomes through advancing health IT, please complete the Advancing Healthcare Quality Through Technology (AHQT) Readiness Assessment by **November 30, 2026**. If you have not completed the assessment yet, please check your email for the online version. You may also review and complete the PDF version of the assessment below.

Once completed, please email the PDF to ahqt@midwestcmsqinqio.com with the subject line: "**Midwest QIN-QIO AHQT Readiness Assessment: [Your Organization Name].**"

PDF Version by setting:

- Hospital and/or Outpatient Clinic
- Nursing Home

Completing the AHQT Assessment offers several valuable benefits to your organization:

- Receive a tiered feedback report (Tier 0–3) of your current health IT capabilities, helping you understand where you stand in your digital health journey.
- Use your tier assignment to set realistic improvement goals, create a roadmap for advancement, and track progress over time.
- Connect with a designated Quality Improvement Advisor (QIA), who will follow up to review your results and provide tailored technical assistance for those that qualify for direct support.
- Helps the QIN-QIO identify and prioritize educational opportunities based on themes analyzed from results received from all participating providers.
- Identifies if a cybersecurity risk analysis should be a priority within your organization's Emergency Preparedness All Hazards Planning. Our cybersecurity expert will use the information you provide to offer guidance.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact us at ahqt@midwestcmsqinqio.com or book a virtual meeting with us. We are here to support you every step of the way, recognizing that while patient care is at the heart of your mission, a strong digital framework is a critical component of delivering safer, higher-quality, and more equitable healthcare.



Reconsent to the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) Agreement to Participate

NHSN has updated its Agreement to Participate and Consent. All facilities participating in NHSN must electronically accept the updated agreement.

What you need to do:

1. The facility's NHSN Administrator must log in to NHSN.
2. Select the "Reconsent" alert tile on the NHSN home page and follow the prompts.

Detailed CDC instructions are available in the Guidance for Accepting the Updated NHSN Agreement to Participate and Consent.

Need assistance? The Midwest QIN-QIO can help. Access the steps to change your NHSN Facility Administrator or contact your QIA for one-on-one support.

Next Steps for Providers



We would like to share some of the activities that will be happening over the next several months.

You should be working with your QIA to establish priority areas and determine next steps in our quality improvement collaboration. This will help us understand your organization's environment and culture, previous improvement efforts, and overall capacity for new initiatives.

We will then discuss areas we identified for improvement, and those most important to your organization. This helps us prioritize what to work on and determine how we can support your needs. We will work with you to develop a Quality Action Plan to help you achieve your improvement goals.

You may have already received, or will receive a survey to assess your health information technology (health IT) capabilities and needs (detailed in AHQT section above). If you have completed this survey already- thank you! If not, please do so. It should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Finally, our team has also conducted detailed environmental scans in each of our fourteen states. This provided our team with a comprehensive view of existing initiatives that are in alignment with our improvement priorities. Based on this, your QIA will share ideas about community initiatives that could be helpful in addressing your needs, or partnerships that may be of value to explore. We will discuss with you the best way to facilitate any meaningful connections to community and state work that can benefit your organization.

These activities will lay the groundwork for ongoing quality improvement decisions and how we can best support you and your team.

We are so excited to be working together!

No Wrong Door

Need something?

Our team is committed to offering timely assistance regardless of how you connect with us! If you have a question, or need help with something, your dedicated Quality Improvement Advisor (QIA) is here to help! Your QIA will be checking in with you periodically, however, if you need something, please reach out any time.

To find a QIA for your state, visit: midwestcmsqinqio.com/about-us/meet-the-team/. If you are unsure who to contact, or would like more information about what we offer or how we can partner with you, please reach out to us at: contact@midwestcmsqinqio.com.

We will respond to inquiries promptly and look forward to working with you!



Leadership Spotlight



John Keefe
Cybersecurity Analyst

Describe your professional background/experience:
I am an Information Technology and Cybersecurity Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) executive, consultant, and subject matter expert with more than 25 years of global leadership experience, primarily in healthcare. In my current role supporting the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) 13th Statement of Work, I work with healthcare organizations to conduct cybersecurity assessments, reduce risk, strengthen cyber resilience, and provide quality improvement support and technical assistance to help protect critical healthcare systems and services.

What do you enjoy most about your work (or your team's work) on the QIN-QIO?

I enjoy combining my years of experience in cybersecurity, IT governance, and risk management with work that has a direct impact on healthcare and patient safety. One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is helping healthcare organizations, especially those with limited resources, better understand their cybersecurity risks and turn those challenges into practical, achievable improvements.

Through the QIN-QIO program, I can provide guidance, assessments, education, and risk-reduction strategies that help organizations strengthen their cyber resilience and prepare for potential threats. I also appreciate the collaborative approach of the program, which allows us to work alongside providers, understand their unique needs, and help them build sustainable cybersecurity capabilities. Most importantly, I see a clear connection between cybersecurity and healthcare delivery. Cyber incidents can disrupt critical systems, communication, and access to care. That's why I strongly believe: Cyber Safety is Patient Safety. Being able to help organizations protect both their operations and the patients they serve makes this work especially meaningful.

What is one thing you are excited about accomplishing or a goal you have set as part of the QIN-QIO work?
My goal is to help establish a scalable healthcare cybersecurity improvement model through the QIN-QIO that moves providers from simply identifying cybersecurity gaps to achieving measurable risk reduction. By the time the program concludes in 2030, I'd like to see a repeatable process in place that helps healthcare organizations strengthen cybersecurity, improve incident preparedness, and maintain continuity of patient care. Ultimately, I hope my contribution demonstrates that cybersecurity support can lead to measurable improvements in both healthcare resilience and patient safety.

What is an important professional lesson you have learned from any colleagues (past or present)?
One of the most important lessons I learned came early in my career from a retired Air Force general who led our IT division. He told me, "Stick to the facts, keep emotion out of decision-making, remain calm, and listen before reacting." It's advice I've followed throughout my career, and it's played a significant role in my success.

Sharing Out Suggestions (SOS)



Citation Review: F605 Chemical Restraints

A real-world quality of care citation and the key opportunities to improve supervision, communication, and resident safety.

Read full article

Resource Highlight



Falls Intervention Checklist

This checklist serves as a practical resource to help healthcare organizations identify fall risks, implement targeted interventions, and support resident safety.

Access resource

Upcoming Events

November 5
1PM - 2 PM CT

Prevent and Protect monthly webinar series.
Title: Infection Prevention Program Planning - Risk Assessment and Program Oversight

Description: Join us to learn how to use the IPC risk assessment process to identify priorities, focus resources, strengthen surveillance activities, and guide infection prevention program planning.

Learn more

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