



# CLIF NOTES

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A message from the AHCA/NCAL President & CEO

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## Remaining United and Strong in 2025

The past 12 months have been incredibly busy and eventful. With everything that's happened, it's exciting to share that **we have remained united and strong**. There's no better place to be as we move full speed ahead into 2025.

It is important to recognize and thank the AHCA and NCAL Boards - and in particular, AHCA Board Chair Phil Scalo. Phil had the task of finding a new President and CEO to replace the irreplaceable Mark Parkinson. Working with large parts of the membership, Phil led the search process that involved some amazing candidates with whom I am humbled to be associated. It was a true honor to be selected, and I am confident Phil will continue to lead us on the path to a successful future. He has also tirelessly focused on member outreach this year, which will lead to record growth in 2025. A big thank you goes to Phil and everyone who volunteers their time on the Boards.

Today we released our [2024 Annual Report](#), which outlines AHCA/NCAL's overarching goals over the past 12 months, as well as our success and achievements. I'd like to share some highlights from the report, as well as some important updates that illustrate the commitment of AHCA/NCAL to support the work you do every day.

## Census Rebounds

This time last year, we were still recovering from a pandemic that hit our profession exponentially hard. You all did a remarkable job caring for residents while facing the ongoing business challenges. And the good news is that *census has officially returned to pre-pandemic levels* (80 percent). This is amazing and encouraging as we head into 2025.

## Quality Remains at the Forefront

A big part of our success in 2024 was because of you and your ongoing commitment to quality. We had a nearly 10 percent increase in Intent to Apply (ITA) submissions for the 2025 National Quality Award Program. In the 15 years we have collected ITAs, this is the second

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highest number we have ever received with more than 1,800! Even if you missed the opportunity to submit your ITA, don't worry. You can still submit a [Quality Award application](#), and the deadline is **January 23, 2025, at 8 PM Eastern**.

As you know, Hurricane Milton forced us to cancel our annual convention this year. It was a huge disappointment to not be able to celebrate this year's 800-plus Quality Award recipients at *Delivering Solutions 24* in Orlando. But there is great news! We plan to recognize this year's recipients at the [AHCA/NCAL Quality Summit](#) in Atlanta April 7-9, 2025. More information about the event and how to register will be available in January. Congratulations to these incredible organizations, and we can't wait to finally celebrate you!

Also be sure to mark your calendars for *Delivering Solutions 25*, where we will celebrate the 2025 Quality Award recipients. This will be held October 19-22, 2025, at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas. More information will be available in the upcoming months, and we are excited to be together again.

### **Work Continues on Staffing Mandate**

It's unfortunate that at this critical time when our nation needs more caregivers, we've had to spend much of our energy trying to stop federal policymakers from making matters worse. We continued to work diligently this year on defending the profession against the Biden Administration's unrealistic staffing mandate. In addition to our legal challenge, we have what we believe to be a very strong legislative strategy. And with a new administration and Congress next year, we are very optimistic that one way or another, the rule will be defeated. It's important to note that each of you plays an important role in this outcome.

This year, members hosted more than 180 tours in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living communities, and centers for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities across the country. That is tremendous! These are important because they help our members of Congress understand what we do, how we do it, and the importance of supporting our profession. And it gives them a chance to better understand why this staffing mandate will only hurt, not help. Let's keep up the good work in 2025 and host even more. Reach out to [Matt Smyth](#) if you need assistance or have questions about hosting these tours. We must continue to give this everything we have and remain united to win.

### **Focus on Workforce**

We know that increasing the available workforce continues to be a top concern. This year, we engaged with provider groups and as part of coalition partnerships to advocate for common sense workforce solutions, such as immigration. We also advocated for federal funding to expand CNA career pathways and developed numerous resources and trainings to help providers improve recruitment and retention. We are pleased to share that there was an increase of more than 108,000 jobs added to our profession in 2024.

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But there is still work to do—nursing homes still need more than 100,000 workers to return to pre-pandemic levels. That is why the Board of Governors has made growing the long term care workforce an ongoing priority. We want to ensure you have the workforce resources and tools you need to be successful, and that is why we will continue to strengthen our [Careers in Caring](#) effort. The site offers resources to help providers recruit workers and health care professionals into long term care.

### **Rationalizing the Regulatory System**

Many of you are frustrated with the survey process and increasing regulations—and rightly so. The past four years, we've seen federal bureaucrats double down on a broken oversight system that focuses on punitive approaches, losing sight of what actually promotes quality and what's best for our residents. We have seen some progress this year through the pilot of risk-based surveys in certain states, and we hope to see that program expand. We are hopeful that with a new administration, there will be opportunities for better collaboration to foster a more efficient and effective oversight system.

### **Defending the Sector on Capitol Hill**

Ensuring Medicaid and Medicare are sustainable is critical for the sector to not only survive, but thrive, and our team has done a tremendous job to ensure this. This year, we were successful in securing a more than 4 percent Medicare Part A rate increase in FY 2025 for SNF providers. Additionally, we continued to support many of our state affiliates with their advocacy efforts to boost Medicaid rates and as their Medicaid programs transition to the Patient Driven Payment Model. The stories from many of you about managed care are concerning to say the least, and we will continue to fight against unfair practices.

### **Networks See Additional Growth**

While AHCA/NCAL wages the policy battle, the growth of managed care demands that we also find ways to control our own destiny in this shifting paradigm. This was also a year of continued growth of the provider-owned networks we help our members develop. Members launched the first in Iowa in 2020. There are now 11, with three or more expected to launch in 2025. These integrated state networks are producing real results for their patients such as improving quality care and demonstrating to policymakers and health plans the value of what we do. We anticipate continued growth over the next several years as additional states get involved and continue seeing favorable outcomes with residents and from plans.

### **NCAL Had a Great Year**

The news for assisted living continued to be great in 2024. This year, NCAL reached record membership with more than 300,000 beds/units and more than 5,300 member communities. Additionally, concerns about federal regulation of assisted living haven't materialized. Despite several hearings earlier in the year focused on assisted living, there is

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no appetite on Capitol Hill for federal regulation.

As a result, the NCAL Board and staff were able to focus on several new and exciting projects in 2024, including launching the LTC Data Cooperative for Assisted Living (DCAL) and growing the [Assisted Living Regulatory Resource Center](#) to include a new state bill tracker and regulation mapping tool. NCAL – along with tremendous member and coalition support – also advocated for the successful passage of the *Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act*, which includes a section that creates a pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This is the culmination of several years of work, and we couldn't have been successful without your support and advocacy. We look forward to seeing what else we can accomplish together in assisted living in 2025!

**Thank You!**

There has been a lot of information shared here, but the interesting thing is this isn't everything. We are actively developing strategies for the new administration with all these important issues in mind. AHCA/NCAL leadership, Boards, and staff are hard at work for you every day.

I am beyond thankful for the opportunity to lead AHCA/NCAL, and I'm grateful for the leaders that have come before me and set a solid foundation. Most of all, though, I'm excited for what 2025 holds. We have a lot of work to do, but I am confident we will be successful.

Have a wonderful holiday season. Let's rest, regroup, and get ready to move ahead united and stronger than ever!



**Clifton J. Porter, II**  
President & CEO, AHCA/NCAL

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