



2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ELEVATE QUALITY: Advancing Leadership, Safety, and Patient Experience

October 2, 2026

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

KEY TAKE AWAYS

✓ Lead quality improvement across the continuum of care.

✓ Improve outcomes through evidence-based practices.

✓ Enhance patient experience and safety.

✓ Create sustainable, system-wide impact.

University of Utah
Department of Family and
Public Health

310 Wakara Way, Suite 1100
Salt Lake City, UT 84108



[Register Now!](#)

CHPQ CEs through
NAHQ pending



\$65 for current Members
\$125 Membership + Conf
\$150 for Non-Members

• AGENDA •

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Breakfast & Networking

Start your day with breakfast, conversation, and opportunities to network with peers and quality improvement leaders.

8:00 - 9:00**Welcome & President's Message****Emily Carlson**

Join us for a warm welcome and opening remarks from the UAHQ President as we kick off this year's conference.

9:00 - 9:30**Preventing the Next Fall: From Home to Health Care****Rob Ence and Teresa Brunt**

Falls are a leading cause of injury and health care utilization among older adults. This session explores evidence-based strategies to prevent falls across the continuum of care, highlighting risk factors, care transitions, and collaborative approaches that improve outcomes, preserve independence, and reduce costs.

9:30 - 10:30**BREAK****10:30 - 10:45****When Help Is an Hour Away: What Rural Healthcare Teaches Us About Quality, Preparedness, and Resilience****Will Hicken**

Rural healthcare organizations face unique challenges, including workforce shortages, geographic isolation, limited specialty services, and resource constraints. These factors can affect quality, patient safety, access, and operational readiness. Drawing on experience in rural healthcare quality, emergency preparedness, and Search & Rescue, this session explores how preparation, communication, resourcefulness, community partnerships, and resilience help rural organizations overcome barriers and maintain safe, high-quality care.

10:45 - 11:15**Small Changes, Big Impact: A Practical QI Approach to Improve Prediabetes Screenings****Kate Jenkins**

Learn how a primary care clinic improved prediabetes screening through simple quality improvement methods. This session will explore the integration of the ADA's Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment into clinical workflows, key implementation lessons, and opportunities to strengthen preventive care.

11:15 - 12:00

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LUNCH**12:00 - 12:30****UAHQ Business Meeting**

All members are invited to attend the annual business meeting to hear updates from UAHQ leadership, celebrate our progress, and learn about plans for the year ahead.

12:30 - 1:00**Interactive Networking Session**

Move beyond traditional networking with a fun, interactive opportunity to connect with peers, collaborate on shared challenges, and expand your professional network.

1:00 - 1:30**Owning the Outcome, Managing None of the Staff**
Anna Smith

Quality leaders are often responsible for outcomes they cannot directly control. This session explores practical strategies for influencing change, overcoming resistance, understanding what motivates others, and using AI to prepare for high-stakes conversations that drive quality improvement.

1:30 - 2:30**BREAK****2:30 - 2:45****Leading Transformation at Scale**
Sheralee Peterson

Discover how a system-wide approach to quality improvement can drive better outcomes, enhance patient experience, reduce costs, and support caregiver well-being. This session will share practical strategies for reducing clinical variation, engaging frontline teams, and creating sustainable change that advances the Quadruple Aim across diverse care settings.

2:45 - 3:45**Wrap-up & Closing Remarks**

Join the UAHQ President-Elect for closing reflections, key takeaways, and a look ahead as we conclude this year's conference.

3:45 - 4:00

SPEAKERS



Emily Carlson, MHA, LSSGB, CPHQ

Emily Carlson is the current President of the Utah Association for Healthcare Quality (UAHQ) and serves as the Associate Director of Shared Savings and Quality Improvement Operations for the University of Utah's Department of Family Medicine and Public Health. With more than 20 years of experience in healthcare quality improvement, Emily has worked across multiple healthcare organizations in Utah, helping teams improve outcomes, achieve quality metrics, and succeed in value-based care initiatives. Outside of work, Emily enjoys spending time with her husband, their three children, and six beloved pets. During Utah's warmer months, she can often be found hiking, fishing, exploring mountain backroads, or glamping with her family. In the winter, she enjoys traveling to warmer destinations or curling up with a good book.



Teresa, MSN, BSN, RN

Teresa is a proud Utah native. She attended Weber State University and earned her Associate's degree in nursing. She completed her bachelor's degree in 2012 and returned to Weber in 2017 and earned Master's degree in nursing education. She celebrated 40 years of being in nurse in the fall of last year.

Teresa has been a bedside emergency room nurse for most of her nursing career. She is currently the Injury Prevention and Trauma Outreach coordinator for Intermountain Medical Center in Murray, Utah. The main focus of her job is driven by the top three mechanisms of trauma. Currently those are ground level falls, motor vehicle and motorcycle accidents. But the best thing about this job is that I am in the community teaching all things injury prevention, including Stop the Bleed. She is always looking for opportunities to educate and hopefully have a true impact on reducing trauma. She is very passionate about working closely with EMS and values the care they provide to trauma patients in the prehospital setting. She can honestly say that she loves her job.

Teresa is married and has 4 amazing children. Her pride and joy are her 6.5 grandkids. She loves to read, play the piano, and spend time exploring the beauty of Utah.



Rob Ence, MBA

Rob Ence is the Executive Director of the Utah Commission on Aging (UCOA) which connects research, policy, and community resources for all Utahns. He led the development of and leads Utah's Master Plan for Aging, a perspective and strategy for all Utahns and helps guide policy and program decisions. Ence led the effort to create UCOA's website www.utahaging.org, Utah's unique virtual resource center.

Formerly, Ence directed the Bateman Horne Center (BHC) in Salt Lake City, Utah. BHC is a non-profit clinical research center of excellence leading education, research, and clinical treatment for multi-system chronic complex diseases such as myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), fibromyalgia, long COVID, post-viral syndromes, and related comorbidities.

Ence served for five years as the West Regional Vice President for AARP after serving a decade as AARP Utah State Director. His other career work includes local nonprofits, work in the financial services industry, and Marriott Corporation.

Ence has an MBA and BA Psychology from the University of Utah. He lectures on advance care planning, financial security, health and wellness, livable communities, caregiving, and digital equity and literacy. Ence has served on several boards of directors including Comagine Health, Envision Utah, Alzheimer's Association of Utah, Community Counseling Center, and Repertory Dance Theater and now advises the Utah Governor's W.I.S.E. initiative on aging.

Ence resides with his spouse Liz in Cottonwood Heights. They have four children and sixteen grandchildren. They love travel, exercise, sports, choral and symphonic music, and all the performing arts.

SPEAKERS



Will Hicken, CRHCP

Will Hicken is the Quality Control Coordinator and Rural Health Clinic Compliance Coordinator at Uintah Basin Medical Center. He is a Certified Rural Health Clinic Professional (CRHCP) and a Stanford Medicine Improvement Science Fellow. Outside of work, Will is active in his community through Duchesne County Search & Rescue, the County Fair Board, and his role as Duchesne County Historian. He enjoys spending as much time outside as he can.



Kate Jenkins, MPH, CHES

Kate Jenkins is a health educator with the Utah County Health Department's chronic disease prevention team, where she focuses on diabetes and cardiovascular health. She has worked with several primary care clinics in Utah County on quality improvement projects in these areas, aimed at strengthening prediabetes and chronic kidney disease screenings, improving blood pressure control rates, and enhancing social-needs screening and referral processes. Kate holds a master's degree in public health from Brigham Young University and is a Certified Health Education Specialist. She also currently serves as president-elect for the Utah Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education. Outside of work, Kate enjoys spending time outdoors, including biking, hiking, and playing tennis and pickleball.



Anna Smith, MHA, ACC, CPTM

Anna Smith, MHA, CPTM, ICF-Credentialed, is an executive coach and leadership consultant for community health center, hospital, and health system leaders, and the founder of Wildbrush Collective. She has spent over 20 years in healthcare workforce development, with a special focus on the managers and mid-career leaders who hold organizations together and are too often promoted without support. Her work pairs operational systems with human grounding to build leaders who last. She also serves as the Interim Director of People and Organizational Strategy at the Montana Primary Care Association. Based in Missoula, MT, she works with clients nationally.



Sheralee Petersen, MBA, PA-C

Assistant Vice President of Intermountain Health Clinical Programs

Sheralee has worked in healthcare for over 20 years. She started her career as a Registered Dietitian prior to completing PA school followed by business school where she completed her MBA with an emphasis in Healthcare Management.

Throughout her career, she has held various leadership roles both internally and externally. She currently serves as the Assistant Vice President of the Intermountain Health Clinical Programs, helping people achieve optimal health outcomes by leading system-wide best practices and innovating care delivery for today and in the future.

Sheralee has an interest in health policy and has engaged in both state and federal legislation targeting improved care quality and access.

Outside of work, Sheralee spends time connecting with her two children and husband. Together they enjoy skiing, cycling and traveling.