

**ESRD KHARES & 18 ESRD Networks:  
A Quality Improvement & Unified Emergency Response Partnership**

After Hurricane Katrina exposed critical gaps in emergency care for kidney patients, CMS designed and deployed an ESRD national contractor to ensure dialysis patients — who cannot miss life-sustaining treatments — are always protected during disasters.

Currently, at the center of this system is the ESRD Kidney Health Analytics & Responsive Emergency Support (KHARES) contractor, which serves as the national command center. Supporting it are 18 ESRD Networks that provide on-the-ground coverage across all 50 states and territories. Together, they form a model that connects national oversight with local action — keeping kidney patient care uninterrupted during emergencies while continuously improving care quality nationwide.

**ESRD KHARES handles the big picture** — providing national coordination, and data analytics. This includes running a 24/7 helpline, leading an Emergency Management Leadership Committee, hosting an annual Emergency Response Summit, and serving as the main point of contact for federal partners like CMS, CDC, and HHS.

**18 ESRD Networks handle the ground-level work** — building state-specific disaster plans, partnering with local emergency officials, monitoring facility status during crises, and conducting real-time patient needs assessments.

Together, they ensure America's dialysis patients receive high-quality care every day —and life-saving support when disaster strikes. Using a Monitor-Analyze-Evaluate-Report framework, this partnership drives measurable improvements:

- 18 ESRD Networks implement locally: Deliver targeted technical assistance to facilities, use secure data access to identify improvement opportunities, mentor low-performing facilities, and build regional coalitions addressing local challenges.
- ESRD KHARES provides the infrastructure: Maintains a comprehensive data environment that impacts the ESRD Quality Reporting System ([EQRS](#)), National Healthcare Safety Network ([NHSN](#)), Medicare claims, builds performance dashboards, conducts national analytics, develops Change Packages with best practices from high-performing facilities, and facilitates Clinical Key Priority Focus Calls

Together, they share focus on four key priorities: Empower patient choice (home dialysis, transplant), improve care coordination (reduce hospitalization), promote whole health (physical, mental, nutritional, vocational), and enhance data interoperability (EHR integration, real-time reporting). Both programs prioritize Patient and Family Engagement (PFE), involving patients as partners in emergency planning, quality improvement initiatives, treatment decisions, and life goal planning that aligns care with individual values and priorities.