HUSCH BLACKWELL

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OVERVIEW

Zaina represents hospice providers in government audits and reimbursement disputes, helping safeguard payments for end-of-life care.

Her practice is focused on the hospice industry, giving her deep familiarity with evolving audit methodologies and insight into enforcement trends. She works in an increasingly active enforcement environment, where Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and contractor-led audits challenge patient clinical eligibility and documentation compliance to seek repayment for hospice services already provided. In this context, she helps

> *The Husch Blackwell Hospice & Palliative Care team was a great partner in the audit appeal process. They were invested in the hospice's success and demonstrated an ongoing commitment to collaboration, attention to detail, and advocacy. Not only did they keep us informed at every step of the process, they also solicited our input and incorporated our ideas wherever possible. Together, we were able to obtain a fair, favorable result, and the hospice can continue to provide quality end-of-life care to deserving patients.*
>
> — President and CEO, Colorado nonprofit hospice and palliative care organization

Industries

Healthcare

Life Sciences

Services

Hospice & Palliative Care

Hospice Medicare & Medicaid Audits

Healthcare Regulatory & Compliance Counseling

Post-Acute Care

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hospice providers navigate appeals and dispute audit findings, including overpayment determinations that threaten critical funding.

As a leader on the firm's Hospice & Palliative Care team, Zaina works alongside a dedicated group of practitioners with substantial experience in this area, enabling coordinated strategies across both routine and complex matters. She regularly assists clients through audits of all kinds, including Targeted Probe and Educate (TPE) reviews; program integrity audits performed by Unified Program Integrity Contractors (UPICs), Supplemental Medical Review Contractors (SMRCs), and CMS's Center for Program Integrity (CPI); and consequential prepayment audits such as Provisional Period of Enhanced Oversight (PPEO) reviews and expanded prepayment reviews. She assists clients with record production and throughout the full administrative appeals process, from redetermination through administrative law judge hearings and beyond.

In addition to audit defense and appeal strategy, Zaina advises hospice providers on regulatory compliance and documentation of best practices, helping prevent or overturn claim denials related to the Medicare conditions of payment. Her work helps clients mitigate risk, withstand government scrutiny, and maintain compliance frameworks that support their mission of serving vulnerable, terminally ill patients.

Zaina takes a collaborative approach, working closely with in-house compliance teams and executive leadership to tailor strategies to each matter. Clients value her thoroughness, responsiveness, and empathy, grounded in her deep familiarity with hospices and the unique, ever-increasing challenges they face. Her advanced training in health administration (MHA) and business (MBA) reflects her long-standing dedication to the healthcare field, a path inspired by her family's background in medicine.

Experience

- Won appeal in *In Home Health, LLC v. Kennedy*, --- F.4th ---- (6th Cir. 2026), securing favorable precedent for hospice and other healthcare providers seeking Medicare reimbursement. In a first-ever opinion at the circuit level, the court clarified that Medicare's safe-harbor limitation-on-liability statute ensures providers receive reimbursement whenever they reasonably interpret operative Medicare notices and practice standards as applied to particular patients.

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Experience

- Successfully represented a client against a Medicare reimbursement audit by the OIG, which initially alleged improper payments of over $140 million (later reduced to a $50 million demand). Through a comprehensive appeal process including expert testimony on statistical sampling and hospice care determinations, the Husch Blackwell team achieved a remarkable victory when an administrative law judge overturned nearly all claim denials, reducing the extrapolated overpayment to less than $10.

Recognition

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*
    - Health Care Law, 2027
- Missouri Bar Pro Bono Wall of Fame, 2021

Education

- J.D., University of Missouri School of Law
    - Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution
    - *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, Editor in Chief
- M.B.A., University of Missouri
- M.H.A., University of Missouri
- B.S.B.A., University of Missouri
    - Business Management and Human Resources
    - *summa cum laude*

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Admissions

- Illinois
- Missouri

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*Zaina works remotely. Contact Zaina to set up a virtual/in-person consultation by appointment.

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