

The Joint Commission LTC Update

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From the Director

If your nursing home is located in Arizona, Mississippi, New York or Wisconsin you should think about signing up for a new Medicare program. The four-state demonstration will determine if cash incentives improve the quality of care and efficiency of operations in nursing homes.

Facilities joining the [Nursing Home Value-Based Purchasing](#) demonstration will be awarded points for performance on quality measures in four areas: nurse staffing, avoidable hospitalizations, resident outcomes, and the scope and severity of deficiency citations received during inspections. Nursing homes with the highest scores or the greatest improvement in their score will be eligible for a performance payment.

Joint Commission accredited nursing homes will be at an advantage in meeting these criteria. [Research](#) shows that long term care accreditation is a risk reduction activity that decreases the likelihood of negative resident outcomes and improves an organization's performance. In addition, accreditation enhances community confidence, supports staff recruitment and education, and provides a structure for organizing business and care processes. If you need more information about becoming Joint Commission accredited, please contact me at gzimmermann@jointcommission.org or (630) 792-5411.

Gina Zimmermann, M.S.



Survey of staffing effectiveness standards suspended

Effective immediately, survey of the Staffing Effectiveness standards (HR.1.30) has been suspended.

“Accredited long term care organizations have told us that complying with the current staffing effectiveness requirements does not significantly impact the quality and safety of care and consumes a substantial amount of resources,” says Gina Zimmermann, [Long Term Care Accreditation Program](#). “To address these concerns we are seeking alternative approaches for evaluating effective staffing from long term care organizations, professional groups and state legislative initiatives.”



The Joint Commission has developed two interim elements of performance, EPs 12 and 13 at PL.2.10, that are being field reviewed as the first step in transitioning to more effective requirements for evaluating staffing in long term care organizations:

- EP 12 focuses on the use of outcomes data to guide analysis of staffing effectiveness.
- EP 13 is similar to current leadership requirements and calls for leadership to review analyses of data related to staffing issues.

These interim EPs will remain in effect until a replacement for the standards is adopted to address staffing effectiveness. These interim EPs are scheduled to be reviewed for approval by The Joint Commission's Standards and Survey Procedures Committee at its July 31 meeting.

“It is critical that long term care organizations continue to focus on effective staffing as it relates to the quality and safety of resident care,” says Zimmermann. The following requirements, which also relate to effective staffing, will continue to be surveyed: LD.03.06.01, EPs 3 and 4; and NR.02.03.01, EP 4.

Field review

The Joint Commission is gathering information on alternative approaches to evaluating staffing effectiveness. [Review and comment](#) on the revisions by July 22.

Long term care surveyors are your ticket to organizational excellence

When a Joint Commission Long Term Care surveyor visits your facility, he or she brings more than standards knowledge and expertise. Not only are they seasoned long term care nurses and administrators, the surveyors are some of the most experienced and credentialed professionals in the long term care field today. And this is only the beginning of the value they bring to your organization, notes Nancy Gorman, M.S., R.N., field director, Surveyor Management and Development.

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Scoring changes

Changes have been made to scoring and criticality levels of some elements of performance in the *Long Term Care Accreditation Manual* based on comments from customers, surveyors and staff. The revisions are listed in the May and June 2009 issues of *Joint Commission Perspectives*. Some changes are effective immediately, others will go into effect July 1, 2009. For more information, see the [Requirements](#).

Web site testimonials

The Joint Commission is looking for interested, enthusiastic supporters to talk about the benefits of Joint Commission long term care accreditation on the [Web site](#). It is a way to showcase your nursing home and it offers an excellent opportunity to share your accreditation success story. If you're interested in participating, please send an e-mail to Pamela Schumacher, *LTC Update* editor, at pschumacher@jointcommission.org.

Standards Q&A

Q. We are unsure how to implement [National Patient Safety Goal 10: Reduce the risk of influenza and pneumococcal disease in institutionalized older adults](#). Which residents should be vaccinated? What if we are unsure if a resident has already received the influenza or pneumococcal vaccinations?

A. All nursing home residents should be vaccinated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations are recommended for persons aged 65 years and older and for persons of any age who have medical conditions that place them at high risk for complications from influenza.

In addition, even if you are unsure if they've been vaccinated, recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the CDC are to administer the vaccines. Several studies have found little data to support any significant increase in complications for persons re-immunized with either the influenza or pneumococcal vaccines.

If you have other standards questions, please complete an [online question form](#) or call the Standards Interpretation Group at (630) 792-5900.

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"To become a Joint Commission surveyor, an individual must have at least five years of leadership experience in a long term care facility and a strong educational background. All of our current long term care surveyors have master's degrees," says Gorman. "In addition, they survey at facilities big and small all over the country. This gives them a depth of experience and knowledge, which benefits your nursing home.

"During the survey, long term care organizations can expect the surveyor to establish a positive relationship with your nursing home's team," Gorman says. "Communication will be open and interactive and focus on the residents and staff. As surveyors conduct the survey, they will educate, point out best practices and give suggestions to your team for improvement in delivering quality and safe resident care."

"We are always looking for feedback on how well we are meeting your expectations and where we can improve," says Gorman. "If you have any suggestions, questions or concerns about the survey or surveyors, please contact me at ngorman@jointcommission.org or call (630)792-5707."

Resources

Web-based training

It's a Long Way Down: Reducing the Risk of Falls

Accessed via the Internet or by DVD, this program will help you:

- Understand the importance and scope of falls
- Plan and develop a fall prevention program
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2009 Accreditation Process Guide for Long Term Care

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