

The Joint Commission

Inspiring health care excellence



The Joint Commission



Mission: To continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value.

Vision: All people always experience the safest, highest quality, best-value health care across all settings.



An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Since 1951, The Joint Commission has maintained state-of-the-art, performance-based standards and evaluated the quality and safety of care by assessing the compliance of health care organizations with these national standards. The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval™, a distinctive seal that is proudly displayed at accredited organizations and certified programs, is recognized internationally as a symbol of quality that reflects a commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 17,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including:

- General, psychiatric, children's and rehabilitation hospitals
- Critical access hospitals
- Home care organizations, including medical equipment services, hospice services
- Nursing homes and other long term care facilities
- Behavioral health care organizations, addiction services
- Ambulatory care providers, including group practices, office-based surgery practices
- Independent or freestanding clinical laboratories
- Disease-specific care and chronic care services
- Health care staffing services

Through its Disease-Specific Care Certification program, The Joint Commission provides advanced certification for chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart failure, inpatient diabetes, primary stroke centers, lung volume reduction surgery, and ventricular assist device for destination therapy.

Accreditation and certification benefit the public by providing an external review of the quality and safety of care being provided. Additionally, the public benefits by knowing that the organization has met high standards for quality and safety, and that it strives to continuously improve its performance. Health care organizations enjoy many benefits from achieving Joint Commission accreditation or certification. In addition to the value that an outside evaluation of the organization's quality and safety of care provides, Joint Commission accreditation and certification also lead to improved patient care and provide the organization with a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Transforming health care

In 2009, The Joint Commission launched its Center for Transforming Healthcare, which aims to solve health care's most critical safety and quality problems. The Center builds on The Joint Commission's reputation for leading the way nationally and internationally to identify the highest priority health care quality and safety problems and to address them. The Center is developing solutions through the application of the same Robust Process Improvement™ methods and tools that other industries have long relied on to improve quality, safety and efficiency. The leading hospitals and health systems in the Center's network have a great deal of experience using RPI methods and tools such as Lean Six Sigma in the health care environment. Using these methods and tools, the Center identifies the most pressing safety problems, measures the magnitude of their impact, pinpoints their underlying causes, develops specific solutions that are targeted to each important cause, and thoroughly tests the solutions in real-life situations. Currently, the Center is working to address hand hygiene, hand-off communications, and wrong site surgery. In keeping with its objective to transform health care into a high reliability industry, The Joint Commission will share the Center's proven effective solutions with the more than 17,000 health care organizations it accredits.

Setting quality standards

Joint Commission standards focus on setting expectations for an organization's actual performance and for assessing its ability to provide safe, high quality care. Joint Commission standards address the organization's level of performance in key functional areas, such as patient rights, patient treatment, medication safety and infection control. If an organization does the right things and does them well, there is a strong likelihood that its patients will experience good outcomes. The Joint Commission develops its standards with input from health care professionals, providers, measurement experts, consumers, government agencies and employers. New standards are added only if they: relate to the quality of patient care or safety; have a positive impact on health outcomes; have value and a return on investment in terms of quality and patient safety; and can be measured and surveyed. Through Joint Commission International, The Joint Commission also develops standards for health care organizations throughout the world.

Evaluating organization performance

The Joint Commission survey is designed to be individualized to each organization, to be consistent, and to support the organization's efforts to improve performance. The Joint Commission's on-site survey focuses on the care provided by the organization and involves an organization's staff in the survey. The survey evaluates an organization's performance of functions and processes aimed at continuously improving patient outcomes. Joint Commission surveys are unannounced, ensuring that surveyors observe organization performance under normal circumstances. Joint Commission surveyors receive ongoing training and use new tools to evaluate standards compliance. The survey process evaluates actual care processes by tracing patients through the care, treatment and services they receive. An organization is required to continuously maintain compliance with all standards. Accreditation or certification is not automatically renewed; at the end of the accreditation or certification cycle, the organization must reapply and undergo another full survey.

Advancing safety and quality

The Joint Commission is committed to improving the safety of care provided to patients in health care organizations. Accreditation and certification are risk-reduction activities; compliance with standards is intended to reduce the risk of adverse outcomes. The Joint Commission demonstrates its commitment to safety through numerous efforts, including:

- Standards are heavily focused on patient safety, particularly in the areas of medication use, infection control, surgery and anesthesia, transfusions, restraint and seclusion, staffing and staff competence, fire safety, medical equipment, emergency management, and security.
- The Sentinel Event Policy helps health care organizations identify and prevent sentinel events (an unexpected death or serious physical or psychological injury).
- *Sentinel Event Alerts* identify specific sentinel events or patient safety problems, describes their common underlying causes, and suggests steps to prevent the occurrence of these events.
- Annual National Patient Safety Goals that accredited organizations are required to meet to address specific areas of patient safety, for example, medication safety and infection control.
- The Office of Quality Monitoring evaluates and tracks complaints and concerns about quality of care issues at Joint Commission accredited organizations. Information about accredited organizations and certified programs may be provided directly to The Joint Commission at (800) 994-6610.
- The Speak Up program provides consumers with safety tips on a variety of health care topics: surgery, infection control, medicines, research studies, follow-up care, living organ donation, medical tests, patient rights, understanding caregivers, pain management, and child safety. Speak Up brochures are available on The Joint Commission Web site.

Providing supportive services

Joint Commission Resources is a global, knowledge-based organization that provides innovative solutions designed to help health care organizations improve patient safety and quality. An affiliate of The Joint Commission, JCR is the official publisher and educator of The Joint Commission. JCR provides expertise on the many issues organizations face in a challenging health care environment through a variety of products and services, including: education programs, publications and multimedia products, its Continuous Service Readiness program, comprehensive health care consulting and custom education, and accreditation and consulting for organizations abroad. JCR is dedicated to helping health care organizations worldwide improve the quality and safety of patient care and achieve peak performance. The Joint Commission and JCR maintain strict policies that prohibit The Joint Commission from sharing any confidential information about accredited organizations with JCR. The fact that an organization has obtained services from JCR is kept completely separate from Joint Commission accreditation decisions. For more information, visit JCR's Web site, www.jcrinc.com, or call the toll-free customer service line at (877) 223-6866.

Providing information to consumers

Consumers look to The Joint Commission for information about accredited health care organizations. At www.qualitycheck.org, consumers can access Quality Check®, a guide that provides the current Joint Commission accreditation or certification status of organizations and programs. For accredited organizations, Quality Check also provides Quality Reports, which include an organization's performance on The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals and National Quality Improvement Goals. The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals address specific areas of patient safety, for example medication safety and infection control. National Quality Improvement Goals require that hospitals report their quality improvement efforts in up to six treatment areas: heart attack, heart failure, community acquired pneumonia, pregnancy and related conditions, surgical infection prevention and children's asthma care.

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