

The Joint Commission Staffing Certification News

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Executive Director

In the past five years, a lot more has changed than just my hairstyle. Five years ago this October, The Joint Commission launched the Health Care Staffing Services Certification Program. Together, we have raised the quality bar for the health care staffing industry. Today, valid and reliable metrics exist.

In a world where overburdened hospitals are increasingly accountable for ensuring competency and validating credentials, I hear more and more clients asking whether a staffing firm is Joint Commission certified. From a retention standpoint, the certification process is a real learning experience. It's not necessarily about changing what you're doing—it's about doing it more efficiently.

Staffing firms continue to tell me that through certification they've gained a solid infrastructure and they are a much stronger organization.

If you're interested in moving from mediocre to excellent, The Joint Commission's Health Care Staffing Services Certification is the right vehicle to get you there. Contact me at (630) 792-5285 or msacco@jointcommission.org

Michele M. Sacco, M.S.



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Key to understanding HCSS measures

An interview with Karen Kolbusz, R.N., B.S.N., M.B.A., associate project director, The Division of Quality Measurement and Research, The Joint Commission.

What are the three most important things that staffing firms should keep in mind when working with the Health Care Staffing Services measures?

- The person responsible for collecting and submitting the firm's HCSS measure data should read the [Healthcare Staffing Services Performance Measurement Implementation Guide, 2nd Edition](#). It is the owners manual for the HCSS measures.
- Measure specifications are absolute and not subject to interpretation. Remember that the HCSS measures are a standardized set. The measure specifications are basically the instructions needed for all firms to collect data in the same manner.
- Data are submitted quarterly to The Joint Commission (no later than 45 days following the end of the calendar quarter) via the Certification Measure Information Process (CMIP) tool. Performance Measure Data Report questions are to be completed in CMIP for each of the three HCSS measures prior to the intracycle review and updated again before the recertification visit.

What appears to be difficult for staffing firms with respect to the Health Care Staffing Services measures?

Selecting the correct sample size and making sure that it is a random sample is a challenge for many organizations. Ideally, the sample should be pulled from all active clinical staff in a reporting month. It should not focus on new hires only or be an alphabetical rotation of employees. Also, the concept that the flow logic (measure algorithm) drives

the measure is hard to grasp. The measure algorithm flowchart is the blueprint for con-



structing the measure. Another difficult concept is that performance improvement is more than collecting and submitting data. It's about analyzing and using the data to improve performance and demonstrating that you have done so.

What tips would you give to staffing firms as they begin using the CMIP tool? Make sure that the numerator and denominator values are entered correctly. Sometimes, the order is reversed, which impacts the measure rate calculated by CMIP. Enter monthly data points (a numerator and denominator value) for each measure. By the time of the intracycle review, firms should have 12 months of data submitted; by the time of their recertification they should have 24 months with no missing months.

Who should staffing firms contact if they have questions about the CMIP tool? They should contact their account representative. If they don't know their account representative's direct extension, they should call (630) 792-3007.

What if staffing firms have questions about the HCSS measures?

Questions can be submitted to <http://manual.jointcommission.org>, a new Web site. Frequently asked questions and answers are collected in a database. If a firm is having trouble analyzing data, I recommend *A Pocket Guide to Using Performance Improvement Tools in Health Care Settings*. More information about the guide is available on [Joint Commission Resources' Web site](#).

Maximizing the benefit of the intracycle review

Make the most of your staffing firm's intracycle review and heed the advice of Joint Commission Health Care Staffing Services Reviewer Bea Ade, R.N., Ph.D.

"The midpoint conference call, which takes place 12 months after the on-site review, is designed to let a staffing firm know whether or not it is currently meeting requirements," Ade says. "While the call focuses on data gathering and submission, it is also intended to give the staffing firm a chance to review compliance with all the standards."

According to Ade, staffing firms that are well prepared for the call get the most out of it. "Before the call, firms should review the standards and be prepared to ask questions on areas that are not clear. Preferably, they can even send the questions ahead of time so that the reviewer can provide a better answer."

Here are some other tips to help prepare

for your firm's intracycle review:

- Assemble and review your data.
- Analyze the data and be ready to discuss trends, results of root cause analyses and outliers within your data.
- Review the performance measure data report questions carefully, and avoid generic answers that do not relate to the data that you have collected.
- Link your responses to your data, preferably with examples from your data to indicate that you have analyzed it.
- Use the online performance measure implementation guide posted on The Joint Commission Connect extranet. It will answer many questions you may have concerning performance measures.



TakeNote

2009 HCSS standards FAQs
For the latest information on challenging standards, visit the recently updated [Health Care Staffing Services standards FAQs](#).

Informational briefings

The Joint Commission is hosting complimentary briefings for staffing firms that are not yet certified. Attendees can speak with industry experts and Joint Commission staff in an intimate group setting. Topics include the application process, select standards, on-site review experiences, pricing, and more. Attendees also receive complimentary copies of the *2009 Health Care Staffing Services Certification Manual* and other helpful materials.

July 28, 8:30 – 11 a.m.
Joint Commission Headquarters
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

To register for this briefing, visit www.jointcommission.org/hcsbriefings.htm.

Look for us

The Joint Commission's Health Care Certification staff will exhibit or speak at the following events.

- Staffing Industry Analysts Healthcare Staffing Summit, Washington D.C., Sept. 15-17
- American Staffing Association's Staffing World, Orlando, Fla., Oct. 20-23, booth 427

Contact us

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Spotlight on Human Resources Management

Based on your experience in the field, what Human Resources Management standards are the most challenging for staffing firms?

Carol Abel, Joint Commission Health Care Staffing Certification reviewer:

The one I observe the most is Standard HR.6—*The HCSS firm evaluates the performance of clinical staff*. Staffing firms often see the evaluation of performance as a function of the client organization where the staff person works. They think they can't evaluate the clinical performance of their employee. Staffing firms must take the lead in evaluating performance using feedback from the client along with a firm-specific evaluation based upon the job description and expectations of that employee. To meet this standard, some staffing firms have created a process and a form that is specific to their firm, and

have taken responsibility for that evaluation. The evaluation then also becomes an important part of the employee's personnel file.

Jean Garrett, Joint Commission Health Care Staffing Certification reviewer:

I see some difficulty meeting Standard HR.4, E.P. 3—*The firm assesses and reassesses competencies on an ongoing basis, based on the customer's report of clinical staff performance*. Staffing firms that are successful in meeting this standard may provide their staff with a feedback card that they give to the nurse manager to complete. Other firms have added boxes to their time sheet to include a short evaluation initialed by the nurse manager. Still other firms are placing more responsibility on the recruiters to document comments in notes or on the firm's evaluation.