

The Joint Commission

Helping Health Care Organizations Help Patients



Table of Contents

The Joint Commission's Five Core Areas of Expertise.....	3
Patient-Centered Accreditation and Certification	4
Patient Safety	9
Public Policy Initiatives	13
Performance Measurement and Improvement	14
Publishing Performance Information	15
Public Information	16
Joint Commission Affiliates	18
Contact Information	19

Everything The Joint Commission does is with one goal in mind: *Helping health care organizations provide safe, high quality care to their patients.*



The Joint Commission's Five Core Areas of Expertise

The health care environment and health care stakeholders of all types are increasingly demanding more from their health care providers: more accountability, more objective performance measurement, more risk assessment and risk reduction, and more improvements in the safety of care. The Joint Commission leads the way in meeting the demand for accountability in health care through its five core areas of expertise:

■ Patient-Centered Accreditation and Certification

Since 1951, The Joint Commission has offered and maintained state-of-the-art accreditation programs for health care organizations. Accreditation today provides organizations with standards, performance improvement tools and an external evaluation of performance.

Beginning in 2002, The Joint Commission began offering a variety of “certification” programs that focus on chronic care or other services that cut across the continuum of care. Health care certification focuses on specific services that health care organizations manage such as:

- chronic diseases or conditions
- the provision of temporary health care staff or other specialized health care services.

■ Patient Safety Initiatives

Health care errors and their harmful effects on patients are a serious issue of

concern in the American health care system. The Joint Commission's initiatives help health care organizations create a culture of safety, understand the real cause of errors, and make systematic changes that can save lives and prevent errors from reoccurring or harming patients.

■ Public Policy Initiatives

As a leader in health care quality and safety, The Joint Commission is uniquely positioned to convene expert panels to investigate and suggest solutions to serious public health care policy issues. The Joint Commission, for example, has addressed the health care staffing shortage, liability reform, and emergency preparedness, among other issues.

■ Performance Measurement and Improvement

The evolving Pay-For-Performance and consumer-directed health care trends demand reliable measurement of the processes and outcomes of care. The Joint Commission is leading the way in developing credible and reliable performance measures.

■ Public Information

Health care consumers need better information to make more informed decisions about their care. The Joint Commission provides the public with objective information about its evaluations of health care organizations.

Patient-Centered Accreditation and Certification

With over 55 years of experience, The Joint Commission has become recognized as the worldwide leader in driving performance improvement in health care organizations. The Joint Commission conducts an independent and objective evaluation of health care organizations and the services they provide to ensure safe and high quality care.

Patient-Centered Accreditation

The Joint Commission's approach to accreditation is patient-centered and data-driven.

The Joint Commission on-site accreditation process is centered on

the **Tracer Methodology**. Joint Commission surveyors follow the actual experiences of a sample of patients as they interact with their health care team, and evaluate the actual provision of care provided to these patients. This review is designed to look at how the individual components of an organization interact to provide safe, high quality patient care.

In addition to tracing the care of patients, the Joint Commission process includes **System Tracers**, which examine, in detail, specific high-risk components of the health care organization, for example, the medication management process. These activities are customized for each review.



The **Priority Focus Process** utilizes various sources of data to identify priority processes of care that may represent opportunities for improvement. This information can include results of past surveys, reported sentinel events, performance measure data collected and reported to The Joint Commission, and public information through news media and other sources.

A key to making the accreditation process more continuous and less focused around the on-site survey event has been accomplished by conducting surveys on an unannounced basis. Conducting **unannounced surveys** helps ensure that The Joint Commission observes and assesses the health care services as they are normally delivered. Accredited organizations are expected to be always in compliance with standards that help them focus on providing high quality patient care.

The Joint Commission has created a tool, the **Periodic Performance Review (PPR)**, to help organizations meet the continuous demand for accountability. The PPR tool is used for self-evaluation of an organization's compliance with The Joint Commission's standards, and organizations have the option of asking Joint Commission staff to review that PPR and associated action plans. The Joint Commission staff can make suggestions to help the organization improve the quality of care it provides.



Certification

While accreditation takes a comprehensive look at all the elements of a health care organization that provide and support quality health care services, health care certification takes a more targeted view of health care services provided to patients with chronic illness or that are provided to defined populations of patients. The Joint Commission's certification is a review of a specific area of care, services or treatment within a health care organization. This review can encompass management of specific diseases or chronic conditions, or management of how an organization provides staffing on a temporary basis to other health care providers. Regardless of the type of certification, The Joint Commission brings the same level of review to the process as it does to accreditation.

The Joint Commission's Surveyors and Reviewers

The Joint Commission has assembled a world-class team of more than 500 highly-trained and experienced health care professionals who conduct on-site surveys and reviews. This team consists of physicians, nurses, health care administrators, medical technologists, psychologists, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, medical equipment experts, engineers and social workers, all employed by The Joint Commission. Each surveyor or reviewer has passed a Certification Exam and has been provided with intensive classroom and on-site training. In addition to assessing an organization's compliance with standards, these surveyors help educate health care staff on industry best practices.

Through every improvement step, The Joint Commission maintains that there is no substitute for talking directly with patients and staff and for observing, firsthand, the underlying processes of care. Accreditation and certification from The Joint Commission focus on the most significant aspects of performance in the areas of quality and patient safety. Adherence to the Joint Commission's standards helps promote positive patient care outcomes.



As health care delivery has changed over time, so has The Joint Commission. Today The Joint Commission accredits or certifies nearly 15,000 health care organizations and programs nationwide, from small office-based surgical suites to the largest, most complex hospital systems.

Joint Commission Programs

While The Joint Commission has its roots in hospital accreditation, over the years it has developed evaluation programs that support the diverse array of health care settings:

- ▶ **Health Care Services**, including palliative care, physical rehabilitation, subacute care and occupational health services.
- ▶ **Health Care Staffing Firms** that supply supplemental workforce to health care organizations.
- ▶ **Home Care Organizations**, including home health agencies, personal care and support services, hospices, home care pharmacies and home medical equipment providers.
- ▶ **Hospitals**, including general, psychiatric, children's rehabilitation, surgical specialty, long term care and critical access hospitals.
- ▶ **Long Term Care Facilities**, including skilled nursing facilities and nursing homes.
- ▶ **Transplant Centers** that perform organ transplants in hospitals.

▶ **Ambulatory Care Settings**, including ambulatory surgery centers and offices, diagnostic and imaging centers, primary care clinics and physician group practices.

▶ **Behavioral Health Care Organizations**, including substance abuse treatment centers, partial hospitalization programs, community mental health centers, residential treatment facilities and foster care services.

▶ **Clinical Laboratories**, both independent and within other health care organizations.

▶ **Disease-Specific Care Programs** and services for the care of patients with specific or chronic conditions, such as stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

As new programs are developed to service patients' health care needs, The Joint Commission develops new standards or enhances existing standards for its array of accreditation and certification programs.

The Joint Commission and Government

Since the inception of the Medicare program in 1966, federal and state governments have recognized and relied on accreditation by The Joint Commission as a key indicator of quality of care. In the evaluation of performance of hospitals, critical access hospitals, home health agencies, home medical equipment firms, hospices, clinical laboratories and ambulatory surgery centers, The Joint Commission is recognized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as an equivalent substitute for its own inspections.

State agencies also rely on The Joint Commission to conduct independent quality evaluations of health care organizations and programs in lieu of conducting their own inspections to determine compliance with legislative or regulatory requirements, or other licensing requirements. Every state recognizes accreditation from The Joint Commission as satisfying some regulatory requirements, including 48 states for hospitals, 46 states for some types of behavioral health care, and 24 states for some types of home care services.



Making patient safety an imperative in health care organizations is the prime focus of The Joint Commission's accreditation requirements. More than 50 percent of accreditation standards across all types of organizations are directly related to safety. It is increasingly important to examine how health care organizations and programs maintain and enhance their systems and processes to provide safe care for patients.

Sentinel Event Policy

Patient safety is at the core of The Joint Commission's standards and policies related to sentinel events (any unexpected occurrences involving death or serious physical or psychological injury, or risk thereof). The Joint Commission's Sentinel Event Policy calls for the identification, voluntary reporting to The Joint

Commission, evaluation and prevention of sentinel events within accredited and certified organizations. The policy requires organizations to investigate the root causes of adverse events, implement appropriate strategies to prevent reoccurrence, monitor the effectiveness of these strategies, and advise the affected patients and families of errors or unexpected outcomes and the steps taken to correct them.

Reported sentinel events are compiled into a database which currently contains over 3,200 cases. This vast knowledge base of adverse outcomes helps inform and improve The Joint Commission's standards and policies, and provides "lessons learned" information to health care organizations to support their safety improvement efforts.



National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs)

National Patient Safety Goals and their associated requirements focus on priority safe practices that health care organizations must implement and maintain. Examples of current NPSGs include:

- Improve the accuracy of patient identification,
- Improve the effectiveness of communication among caregivers,
- Improve the safety of using medications,
- Reduce the risk of health care-associated infections,

- Encourage the active involvement of patients and their families in the patient's own care as a patient safety strategy.

Compliance with these goals and requirements is reviewed during the on-site evaluation process.

The Joint Commission Sentinel Event Advisory Group, consisting of experts with hands-on experience addressing patient safety issues in health care, conducts a thorough review of all Sentinel Event Alert recommendations, identifies those that are recurring issues, and proposes them for inclusion in the National Patient Safety Goals, which are revised annually.



National Safety Summits

The Joint Commission convenes groups of interested experts in health care to review pressing issues impacting patient safety, and make recommendations. The first of these summits resulted in the publication of the Universal Protocol for Preventing Wrong Site, Wrong Procedure and Wrong Person Surgery™. The protocol has been endorsed by over 50 professional health care associations and organizations as a necessary safety step that all health care organizations should implement.

The Joint Commission has also led the way in developing a taxonomy of patient safety events; a standardized way of referring to the terminology of collecting and organizing patient safety data.



The International Center for Patient Safety (ICPS)

Drawing on a wealth of expertise, resources and knowledge related to patient safety, The Joint Commission and Joint Commission Resources (JCR) have established the International Center for Patient Safety (ICPS). The Center's mission is to continuously improve patient safety by providing solutions, processes and procedures that help eliminate preventable adverse events in all health care settings worldwide.

The ICPS forges partnerships with leaders in both developing and developed countries to identify health care safety needs across the entire continuum of care, and matches these with proven solutions and best practices. More information can be found on the Center's web site:

www.jcpatientsafety.org



Joint Commission International and The World Health Organization

Recognizing that health care errors seriously harm one in every ten patients around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated The Joint Commission and Joint Commission International (JCI) as the world's first **WHO Collaborating Centre** dedicated solely to patient safety.

The collaboration among The Joint Commission, JCI and WHO focuses worldwide attention on patient safety and best practices that reduce safety risks to patients, and coordinates international efforts to spread these solutions as broadly as possible. This is accomplished by collaborating internationally with ministries of health, patient safety experts, national agencies on patient safety, health care professional associations and consumer organizations.



Public Policy Call to Action

To identify achievable solutions to critical issues affecting the quality and safety of health care, The Joint Commission has launched a series of public policy initiatives.

The **Public Policy Call to Action** focuses on key areas related to patient safety and health care quality. In approaching these issues The Joint Commission:

- Convenes roundtables with experts and stakeholders who are knowledgeable about or affected by the issue,
- Develops and widely distributes white papers that include the prominent elements of the roundtable discussions,
- Holds national symposiums that permit in-depth exploration of important aspects of the problem and the solutions,
- Conducts follow-up regional summits and other activities.

The Joint Commission Public Policy Call to Action has addressed issues such as:

- Nurse Staffing Crisis
- Emergency Preparedness
- Emergency Department Overcrowding
- Narrowing the Organ Donation Gap
- Health Care Professional Education
- Tort Resolution and Injury Prevention
- Health Literacy and Patient Safety

Upcoming issues to be addressed include:

- The Hospital of the Future
- Development of a National Performance Measurement Data Strategy
- Reducing Waste and Improving Efficiency in Health Care



Credible Evaluations

Performance measures – quantitative measures used to evaluate and improve outcomes or the performance of functions and processes – are key elements of all The Joint Commission’s accreditation and certification programs. Performance measures supplement and guide the standards-based survey process by providing:

- A more targeted basis for the regular accreditation or certification survey,
- A basis for continuously monitoring performance,
- A basis for guiding and stimulating continuous improvement in health care organizations.

Core Measures

The Joint Commission solicits input from a wide variety of stakeholders about potential areas for reliable core measures. Since 2002, hospitals have been submitting data on core performance measures in areas such as acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, pneumonia, pregnancy and related conditions and surgical infections prevention.

Each accredited organization is required to select from the core measure sets applicable to its array of services.

Performance Measures Library

As new uses for measures arise, including pay for performance, physician-level measurement and public reporting, a centralized repository of reliable, tested and evidence-based measures will be available in The Joint Commission Performance Measures Library. It provides stakeholders with ready access to measures that can be used by any organization to improve the safety and quality of health care.

The library can be accessed on The Joint Commission’s web site at www.jointcommission.org.



Public Information

The Joint Commission has a longstanding commitment to providing the public with meaningful information about the comparative performance of accredited organizations. It is The Joint Commission's belief that making this information available to the public helps consumers make decisions about their health care providers and encourages quality improvement initiatives throughout the health care system.

The Joint Commission's commitment is fulfilled, in part, through the provision of organization-specific information on Quality Check[®]. Quality Check is a comprehensive guide to the nearly 15,000 Joint Commission accredited/certified health care organizations and programs throughout the United States. The web-based information is searchable by location and health care setting and allows comparisons between accredited organizations.

Quality Reports

Consumers and purchasers of health care expect and demand access to useful and accurate information about health care organizations. The Joint Commission's Quality Reports contain contact information and accreditation status, as well as information on:

- ▶ Joint Commission accreditation decision and the effective dates of the accreditation award,
- ▶ Programs or services accredited by other accrediting bodies,
- ▶ Compliance with the applicable Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals,
- ▶ Performance on National Quality Improvement Goals (hospitals only) and reporting on key areas of quality of care,
- ▶ Special quality awards.

The Joint Commission
Quality Check[®]



Quality Check[®] and Quality Reports are available through the Quality Check web site, www.qualitycheck.org.

Advisory Groups

A diverse group of nationally-prominent individuals and organizations serve on The Joint Commission's advisory groups and councils that meet on a regular basis to discuss current health care issues and suggest how The Joint Commission can best address these issues. Current advisory groups and councils include:

- Public Advisory Group on Health Care Quality
- Business Advisory Group
- Nursing Advisory Council
- Advisory Council on Performance Measurement
- Committee on Health Care Safety
- Sentinel Event Advisory Group

Professional and Technical Advisory Councils

Each accreditation program convenes regular meetings of a technical advisory panel, comprised of national experts, whose role is to provide advice and assistance in the development of new and revised standards, and recommend improvements to the accreditation process. Consulting representatives from national groups help The Joint Commission ensure that its standards represent a national consensus of opinion.

Public Comment

All potential Joint Commission standards and National Patient Safety Goals are posted on the web site for a period of public comment. This ensures that all interested parties can have access to the materials to review and make suggestions that The Joint Commission takes into consideration before implementing a change.

Program Advisory Councils

Through program-specific advisory councils, accredited organizations also serve as a "sounding board" regarding proposed changes to the accreditation process and to provide guidance to The Joint Commission's value enhancement efforts.





Behind every Gold Seal of Approval™ is an organization committed to quality.

The Joint Commission's "Gold Seal of Approval™" is an internationally recognized symbol of quality. Organizations that have achieved accreditation or certification from The Joint Commission may display the Gold Seal as an indicator that the organization has proven its commitment to high quality patient care and its willingness to be measured against the highest and most rigorous standards of performance.

Forward-thinking health care organizations volunteer for evaluations by The Joint Commission to stimulate improvement efforts in health care quality and patient safety and to help support operational efficiencies.

For more information about The Joint Commission, please call 630-792-5000 or visit our website at www.jointcommission.org.

Joint Commission Resources (JCR)

The Joint Commission's affiliate, Joint Commission Resources, offers an extensive array of publications, guides, periodicals, consulting services, education programs and other resources to assist organizations in improving their performance. JCR partners with organizations, providing services to assist in improving the quality, safety and efficiency of health care services.



Joint Commission International (JCI)

The Joint Commission's international division is a key proponent of health care quality and safety standards throughout the world. Whether it is consulting with international health care organizations, health ministries or public health agencies, or conducting on-site evaluations of international health care organizations, JCI advances the quality and safety of care on an international basis.



For more information, please visit the website at www.jcrinc.com.

The Joint Commission is governed by a 29-member Board of Commissioners, which includes seven members each from the American Hospital Association and the American Medical Association, six public members, three members each from the American College of Physicians and the American College of Surgeons, one member from the American Dental Association, and one at-large nursing member. The Joint Commission president also serves on the Board.

The Joint Commission's headquarters in Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois houses almost 500 employees. The field surveyor staff encompasses more than 500 individuals who conduct the on-site surveys and reviews.

The Joint Commission maintains an office in Washington, DC to manage relations with a host of federal agencies and advocate for the interests of The Joint Commission on Capitol Hill.

Contact Information

Headquarters:

The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Blvd.
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
630-792-5000

Washington office:

The Joint Commission
601 Thirteenth St. NW
Suite 1150N
Washington, DC 20005
202-783-6655

Web site address:

www.jointcommission.org

Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety

1515 West 22nd Street
Suite 1300 West
Oak Brook, IL 60523
630-268-7469

www.jcipatientsafety.org

Joint Commission Resources

1515 West 22nd Street
Suite 1300 West
Oak Brook, IL 60523
630-268-7400

www.jcrinc.com



One Renaissance Blvd
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181