The Joint Commission
Inspiring health care excellence
**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.

**A history of continual improvement**

Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. To earn and maintain The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval™, an organization must undergo an on-site survey by a Joint Commission survey team at least every three years. (Laboratories must be surveyed every two years.) The Joint Commission provides accreditation services for the following types of organizations:

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

The Joint Commission also awards Disease-Specific Care Certification to organizations that provide disease-specific care and chronic care services, and an advanced level of certification is offered for: chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart failure, inpatient diabetes and primary stroke centers. The Joint Commission also has a Health Care Staffing Services Certification program.

**Setting quality standards**

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. The standards focus on setting expectations for an organization’s actual performance and for assessing its ability to provide safe, high quality care. Standards set forth performance expectations for activities that affect the safety and quality of patient care. 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 in consultation with health care experts, providers, measurement experts, purchasers, and consumers.

**Evaluating organization performance**

The Joint Commission on-site survey process is data-driven, patient-centered and focused on evaluating actual care processes. The objectives of the survey are not only to evaluate the organization, but to provide education and “good practice” guidance that will help staff continually improve the organization’s performance. Joint Commission on-site surveys are designed to be organization-specific, consistent and to support the organization’s efforts to improve performance.
Advancing safety and quality

The Joint Commission is committed to improving the safety of care provided to patients in health care organizations. In addition to the standards and on-site survey, The Joint Commission demonstrates its commitment to safety through numerous efforts, including:

- 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. Complaints can be sent to The Joint Commission by calling (800) 994-6610 or visiting The Joint Commission website.
- The Speak Up program provides consumers with safety tips on a variety of health care topics including surgery, infection control, medicines, follow-up care, medical tests, patient rights, understanding caregivers, pain management, child safety, and diabetes and dialysis care in the hospital. Speak Up brochures, posters and videos are available on The Joint Commission website.

Transforming health care

Launched in 2009, the Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare aims to solve health care’s most critical safety and quality problems. The Center’s participants – the nation’s leading hospitals and health systems – use a systematic approach to analyze specific breakdowns in care and discover their underlying causes to develop targeted solutions that solve these complex problems. In keeping with its objective to transform health care into a high reliability industry, The Joint Commission shares these proven effective solutions with the more than 20,000 health care organizations it accredits and certifies. Current projects address hand hygiene, hand-off communications, wrong site surgery, surgical site infections, preventing avoidable heart failure hospitalizations, safety culture, preventing falls with injury, sepsis, and insulin safety. The Center also developed the Targeted Solutions Tool™ (TST), an application that guides health care organizations through a step-by-step process to accurately measure their organization’s actual performance, identify their barriers to excellent performance, and direct them to proven solutions that are customized to address their particular barriers. Targeted solutions for hand hygiene, wrong site surgery, and hand-off communications are now available via the TST; other solutions will be incorporated into the TST as the Center completes these projects.

Providing information to consumers

The Joint Commission has a longstanding commitment to providing meaningful information about the comparative performance of accredited organizations to the public. The Quality Check® website, www.qualitycheck.org, launched in 1996, fulfills this commitment. 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 the following treatment areas: heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, pregnancy and related conditions, surgical infection prevention, children’s asthma care, stroke care, venous thromboembolism and inpatient psychiatric services.
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. JCR offers services across all sites of patient care. For more information, visit JCR’s website or call the toll-free customer service line at (877) 223-6866.

Having global impact

Joint Commission International (JCI) was established in 1994 as a division of Joint Commission Resources, Inc. (JCR). JCI extends The Joint Commission’s mission worldwide by assisting international health care organizations, public health agencies, health ministries and others to improve the quality and safety of patient care in more than 80 countries. JCI’s accreditation program was launched in 1999. The standards were developed by international experts and set uniform, achievable expectations for structures, processes and outcomes for health care organizations. The requirements for accreditation also include international patient safety goals that highlight problematic areas in health care and describe evidence and expert-based consensus solutions to these problems. The survey process is designed to accommodate specific legal, religious and cultural factors within a country. JCI’s Clinical Care Program Certification (CCPC) launched in 2005 and today includes 15 categories of clinical services. Certification demonstrates excellence in fostering better outcomes through the integration and coordination of care for treatment of a specific disease, condition or clinical care service. CCPC is based on a clear assessment of consensus-based standards and criteria, the effective use of clinical guidelines, and an organized approach to performance measurement and improvement.