



Facts about Joint Commission Accreditation and Certification

Since its founding in 1951, The Joint Commission has been acknowledged as the leader in developing the highest standards for quality and safety in the delivery of health care, and evaluating organization performance based on these standards. Today, more than 19,000 health care organizations use Joint Commission standards to guide how they administer care and continuously improve performance. The Joint Commission is also the only accrediting organization with the capability and experience to evaluate health care organizations across the continuum of care.

What's the difference between accreditation and certification?

Accreditation can be earned by an entire health care organization, for example, hospitals, nursing homes, office-based surgery practices, home care providers, and laboratories.

Certification is earned by programs or services that may be based within or associated with a health care organization. For example, a Joint Commission accredited medical center can have Joint Commission certified programs or services for diabetes or heart disease care. These programs could be within the medical center or in the community.

Both accreditation and certification require an evaluation by The Joint Commission. The evaluation covers compliance with the standards and other requirements and verifies improvement activities. After earning accreditation or certification, health care organizations receive The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval™, a mark of quality.

What are the accreditation programs?

The **Ambulatory Care Accreditation Program** was established in 1975, and today more than 1,900 freestanding ambulatory care organizations are Joint Commission-accredited. These organizations represent a variety of settings, including ambulatory surgery centers, group medical practices, plastic/cosmetic surgery facilities and others.

The **Behavioral Health Care Accreditation Program** began in 1969 with the accreditation of organizations that provided services for persons with developmental disabilities. Today, the Joint Commission accredits more than 1,900 behavioral health care organizations that provide treatment for addictions, crisis stabilization, and residential or group homes, among others.

The **Critical Access Hospital Accreditation Program** was introduced in 2001. Critical access hospitals are small and rural hospitals that meet certain conditions of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The **Home Care Accreditation Program** was established in 1988 and accredits more than 5,600 organizations. Home care services are provided directly or through a contracted individual or organization. These services include personal care or support, home medical equipment, clinical respiratory services, hospice, pharmacy services, and freestanding ambulatory infusion services.

The **Hospital Accreditation Program** has been in existence in some form for more than 60 years. Today, it accredits approximately 4,500 general, children's, long term acute, psychiatric, rehabilitation and surgical specialty hospitals. Approximately 82 percent of the nation's hospitals (including critical access hospitals) are currently accredited by The Joint Commission.

The **Laboratory Services Accreditation Program** began with the accreditation of hospital laboratory services in 1979. The Joint Commission has been accrediting freestanding laboratories since 1995. Today, the Joint Commission accredits nearly 2,000 organizations providing laboratory services.

The **Long Term Care Accreditation Program** was launched in 1966. Today, nearly 1,000 organizations offering long term care services are accredited.

The **Office-Based Surgery Accreditation Program** was introduced in 2001 and today serves specifically as a quality oversight tool for surgical practices with four or fewer practitioners. More than 500 office-based surgery practices are accredited by The Joint Commission.

What are the certification programs?

The **Disease-Specific Care Certification Program**, launched in 2002, is designed to evaluate clinical programs across the continuum of care. Organizations may seek certification for virtually any chronic disease or condition, including asthma, cancer, depression, diabetes, heart disease, heart failure, kidney disease, pneumonia, stroke, women's health, and wound care.

The **Health Care Staffing Services Certification Program** evaluates a staffing firm's ability to provide qualified and competent staffing services for health care providers such as hospitals and nursing homes.

What are the benefits of accreditation or certification for patients?

The benefits of receiving care at a Joint Commission accredited or certified organization include increased confidence in the care provided because you know the organization is:

- continually working to provide the highest quality services.
- periodically evaluated by The Joint Commission for compliance with the standards and other requirements.
- provided with expert advice and education from The Joint Commission about quality improvement.
- able to attract qualified staff because they have more opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.