HEALTH CARE STAFFING SERVICES CERTIFICATION HANDBOOK

A preparation guide to answer your questions about this unique evaluation program

Important Contact Information
General Information (630) 792-5291
http://www.jointcommission.org/certification/health_care_staffing_services.aspx
Thank you for your interest in The Joint Commission Health Care Staffing Services Certification. This certification guide features practical answers to the most commonly asked questions about certification, and is designed to help familiarize you with the review process, policies, procedures and standards as you begin to prepare for certification.

As the nationally and internationally recognized leader in health care quality review, The Joint Commission is an independent, objective evaluator of quality. In keeping with our mission to improve the safety and quality of care provided to the public, The Joint Commission developed this unique certification program to meet an evolving need. The certification program provides a comprehensive evaluation based on demonstrated compliance with the standards and performance measurement and improvement. This comprehensive evaluation is what makes Joint Commission certification the “Gold Seal of Approval™”.

Health Care Staffing Services (HCSS) Certification from The Joint Commission helps differentiate your program from the rest. The Joint Commission Certificate of Distinction assures your customers, staff and other stakeholders that your staffing firm is fully meeting the health care quality and safety needs for which you are responsible. With a quality review perspective that spans over 60 years, The Joint Commission is uniquely qualified to provide you with practical, consultative suggestions and cutting edge recommendations throughout all phases of the certification review process. Improve your staffing firm on an ongoing basis and stay on the leading edge of the staffing industry with Health Care Staffing Services Certification from The Joint Commission.

Once you have reviewed this guide, we invite you to contact the Health Care Staffing Services certification staff at 630.792.5291, to learn more about why staffing firms, hospitals and other healthcare organizations consider Joint Commission certification the best assurance that quality care is being achieved.

Sincerely,

Michele M. Sacco

Michele M. Sacco, MS
Executive Director, Health Care Staffing Services

MISSION
The mission of The Joint Commission is 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.
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Telephone Directory

Health Care Staffing Services Program ............................................. (630) 792-5291
To receive an initial Application for Certification, or for general information about health care staffing services certification

Account Executive ............................................................................. (630) 792-3007
To inquire about your completed Application for Certification, review date or schedule, recertification application or for assistance with specific issues related to a review

Standards Interpretation Group ......................................................... (630) 792-5900
For information about interpreting and how to comply with specific health care staffing services standards. Note: Please request assistance from a health care staffing services specialist. An online form is also available at: http://www.jointcommission.org/Standards/OnlineQuestionForm/

Pricing Unit ....................................................................................... (630) 792-5115
To inquire about certification fee information

Customer Service Center ................................................................. (630) 792-5800
To inquire about names of accredited or certified organizations

Joint Commission Resources ......................................................... toll free (877) 223-6866
To register for, or receive information about education programs, and to purchase, or inquire about publications
Online registration and ordering is available at www.jcrinc.com.

The Joint Commission Web Site: www.jointcommission.org
• Current Joint Commission news
• Quality Check™ – information about accreditation/certification status for specific organizations
• Information about publicizing your certification
• Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
• Revisions to Standards
• Performance Measure Information

Joint Commission Resources Web Site: www.jcrinc.com
• Upcoming education programs
• Catalog of publications
• Perspectives: The Official Joint Commission News Source
• Domestic Consulting Services
**Introduction**

The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits or certifies over 19,000 health care organizations in the United States and internationally. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation’s oldest and largest standards-setting and evaluation body in health care. The Joint Commission has over 60 years of recognized and respected excellence and expertise in evaluating clinical care quality in all types of provider settings.

The Joint Commission's Health Care Staffing Services (HCSS) Certification Program, which launched in October 2004, provides an independent, thorough evaluation of a staffing firm's ability to provide competent staffing services.

The Joint Commission developed this certification program to meet quality oversight needs for the temporary medical staffing industry. These shortages force health care organizations to fill positions with temporary staff provided by staffing firms, which are not subject to any quality oversight mechanism.

*The Health Care Staffing Services Certification Guide* is designed to help you learn about the Joint Commission health care staffing services standards and review process. This guide will provide important information about The Joint Commission, the Health Care Staffing Services Certification standards manual, eligibility for certification, how to request certification, review preparation, the on-site review, and the certification decision.

Please feel free to contact the Joint Commission departments listed in the telephone directory on the previous page for any other information your organization may need.

**The Value of Joint Commission Certification**

*Joint Commission Certification is a Measure of Achievement*

More and more, health care organizations are looking for ways to sift through the hundreds of available staffing firms to identify those that offer the highest quality of services. The Joint Commission Health Care Staffing Services Certification — the “Gold Seal of Approval™” — is a measure of achievement and distinction that is well recognized within the health care industry.

*The Difference Between Certification and Accreditation*

Certification and accreditation are voluntary processes which demonstrate an organization’s commitment to be accountable for the quality of services it offers — and are a pledge to continuously strive for performance improvement. While Joint Commission certification and accreditation share their reputation for quality evaluation criteria and high standards, they differ from each other in terms of the scope they encompass.
Certification demonstrates your commitment to excellence in providing health care staffing services in a comprehensive manner. Certification standards define the performance expectations, structures, or processes that must be in place to ultimately enhance the quality of health care services provided by your staff.

Accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation of the overall quality and safety of an organization. Accreditation is reserved to recognize the evaluation of a set of standards across an entire organization.

Certification and accreditation can be viewed as separate yet complementary Joint Commission programs. Certification complements accreditation by recognizing an organization’s overall competencies in providing quality, safe care, while also recognizing its unique service offerings.

Certification and accreditation differ from licensure in that licensure is the lawful permission to perform a certain activity for a limited period of time. Licensure is linked to regulation and is under the jurisdiction of state or federal governments. The state or federal standards or criteria under which this permission is granted are written into laws and conditions of participation, and portray minimum qualifications necessary to protect the consumer.

**The Benefits of Health Care Staffing Services (HCSS) certification**

Health Care Staffing Services Certification:
- Establishes criteria for providing appropriate and competent staffing services
- Provides a management framework for quality, safety and improving performance
- Provides external validation of sound business practices
- Increases credibility
- Improves risk management and risk reduction
- Enhances contracting opportunities
- Provides a competitive edge in the marketplace
- Can be a tool to attract and retain quality personnel
- Can fulfill regulatory requirements in select states
- Provides potential recognition by liability insurers
- Access to The Joint Commission Leading Practice Library
- Access to Health Care Staffing Services Certification Performance Measure Trend Reports
**Why Choose Joint Commission Certification Over Other Options?**
The Joint Commission is the leader in accreditation and certification, with more than 60 years of experience across the full spectrum of health care organizations. Joint Commission certification represents the “Gold Seal of Approval™” in health care and provides the most comprehensive evaluation process in the industry.

**Our Reviewers – Health Care Staffing Professionals**
The Joint Commission field reviewers are experienced professionals who understand the day-to-day issues that confront you, and have the hands-on expertise to help you resolve them.

The Joint Commission ensures reviewer consistency by providing several weeks of initial training, including precepted reviews with a seasoned reviewer. We also provide annual continuing education and quarterly conference calls to keep reviewers up-to-date on advances in quality-related performance evaluations. Part of the training is ensuring that your on-site review is an educational process, not just an inspection.

Our group of Health Care Staffing Services reviewers is made up of those currently working in the health care staffing and/or hospital industry and also those who have had previous experience in the health care staffing industry. The Joint Commission evaluates its reviewers’ performance continually throughout the year.

**Eligibility**

Any health care staffing firm may apply for Joint Commission certification if all the following eligibility requirements are met:

- The health care staffing firm is located in the United States or its territories or, if outside the United States, is operated by the U.S. government under a charter of the U.S. Congress.
- The health care staffing firm assesses and improves the quality of its services.
- The health care staffing firm identifies the services it provides, indicating which services it provides directly, under contract, or through some other arrangement.
- Clinical Staff of the health care staffing firm provide direct patient care services addressed by The Joint Commission’s standards.
- The health care staffing firm uses performance measurement to improve its performance over time. At least four months of performance measure data must be available at the time of the initial certification on-site review.
- The health care staffing firm has placed at least 10 individual clinical staff on assignments.

The following are eligibility inclusions for the HCSS certification program:

- HCSS certification is limited to the staffing firm’s placement of clinical staff who either provide patient care directly or direct patient care within areas of a contracted entity. The settings in which staff are placed include health care organizations, schools, occupational and community settings, etc.
Disciplines may include, but are not limited to, physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, pharmacy personnel, laboratory technologists, radiology technologists, surgical assistants, rehabilitation personnel, and respiratory therapists.

Types of Programs NOT Eligible for Certification:
- A health care organization's internal registry program
- Contracted services relating to management of functions within a health care organization (for example, management of emergency departments, pharmacy departments, or housekeeping services)
- Nonclinical personnel, such as medical coders, medical records personnel, or transcriptionists
- Individuals acting as independent agents not affiliated with a health care staffing firm
- Health care staffing firms that provide permanent placements only.

Scope of Certification Review
The Health Care Staffing Services certification offers the following three options based on the structure and type of services your firm offers:

Option 1. Includes a single site staffing firm that provides placement of fewer than or equal to 10 disciplines in 25 or fewer states. Includes a minimum one day on-site review; an additional review day may be required if the staffing firm has an office staff greater than 150 full time equivalent staff.

Option 2. Includes a single site staffing firm that provides placement of more than 10 disciplines OR provides placement in more than 25 states. Includes a minimum two day on-site review. An additional review day may be required if the staffing firm has an office staff greater than 150 full time equivalent staff.
- Franchises are eligible for review under Options 1 or 2 only.

Option 3. Includes firms with centralized and integrated functions and multiple staffing offices with shared accountabilities. (Please see Review Process Guide Corporate Addendum for more information on the corporate review option)
- Compliance is assessed through an announced Corporate System Integration Review and unannounced on-site reviews of a stratified sample of staffing sites
  - 10% of these staffing office reviews (or a minimum of one) will be unannounced on-site reviews at the branch location
  - An additional 15% of the sites will be assessed (unannounced) as part of the Corporate System Integration Review conducted at the corporate headquarters
- Findings from the Corporate System Integration Review and each on-site review of staffing sites will impact the corporation's overall certification decision.
**Review Cycle**

The Health Care Staffing Services certification program is a biennial (2 year) review cycle. The biennial review is based on:

- An on-site review, which allows The Joint Commission to evaluate factors relevant to the certification process
- A self-assessment of the firm’s compliance with Joint Commission standards at the mid-point of the review cycle which includes an attestation to the Joint Commission that self-assessment has been completed and a telephone conference with a Health Care Staffing Services reviewer.
- Submission of a Performance Measure Data Report and any tabular and/or graphical displays used to analyze measurement data on a quarterly basis.

**Review Fees**

The Joint Commission bases its fees on several factors, including the size and complexity of the staffing firm. Joint Commission certification fees are based on a combination of an on-site review fee billed during the year of the organization’s on-site review and an annual fee billed in January of each year during an organization’s 2-year certification cycle. Approximately 60% of the organization's total certification fees are due during the year of the on-site review. The staffing firm will be invoiced within 10 days of the certification review date and this invoice is due upon receipt. Failure to pay the invoice may be viewed by The Joint Commission as withdrawal from the certification process and lead to loss of certification. If this is your initial review, you will be required to submit a $1,700 deposit. This deposit will be applied to your overall certification fees. If you are undergoing a re-certification review, you will not need to submit a deposit; however, you will need to complete the application approximately nine months prior to your review date. This is completed in your secure “The Joint Commission Connect” extranet site.

To discuss the review fee for your firm based on your size and complexity, please contact our Pricing Unit at (630) 792.5115 or by email at PricingUnit@jointcommission.org.

**Health Care Staffing Services Certification Overview**

This biennial certification process will consist primarily of two key elements – compliance with set standards and performance measurement.

- A **standard** is a statement that defines the performance expectations, structures, or processes that must be substantially in place for an organization to provide quality care, treatment, and services.
- Performance measurement in health care represents what is done and how well it is done. **Performance measurement** utilizes quantitative tools (known as measures or indicators) to provide an indication of an organization’s or service’s performance in relation to a specified process or outcome.
The Standards
The standards have and will continue to benefit from broad public and field input including a Health Care Staffing Services Certification Advisory Council. The standards do not dictate how the Health Care Staffing service runs its business because they are not prescriptive. The staffing firm has flexibility in how it demonstrates compliance with the standards.

The standards are organized into four groups and address the following concepts:

Leadership
Defining Leadership Roles
Adopting Good Business Practices
Managing Risk

Human Resources Management
Hiring Clinical Staff
Working with Clinical Staff
Supervision
Continuing Education
Performance Evaluation

Information Management
Managing Information

Performance Measurement and Improvement
Planning for Performance Data Management
Working with Performance Improvement Data
Analyzing Data

Programs requesting certification will be required to demonstrate acceptable compliance with all of the applicable standards prior to being awarded a Certificate of Distinction.

The Standards Manual
The Joint Commission’s Health Care Staffing Services Certification Manual is the place to begin when preparing for certification. Even if you do not pursue certification right away, this manual is an excellent tool to help your organization become organized and established. The manual contains functional standards that include expectations that the firm effectively manage clinical staff and measure, monitor, and improve its services over time.

The Health Care Staffing Services Certification Manual is designed for use in self-assessment activities and is the basis for a certification review. The standards manual contains information on the certification process, Certification Participation Requirements, certification policies and procedures, standards, performance improvement and performance measurement and appendices regarding root cause analysis, credentialing, the certification review process and a comparison of Health
Care Staffing Services Certification Human Resources standards to Hospital Accreditation standards.


**Answering Questions About the Standards**
The Joint Commission Standards Interpretation Group is available to answer any questions about the certification standards, including whether and how they apply to your organization, and suggest steps to meet the intent of the standards. You can contact the Standards Interpretation Group by phone at (630) 792-5900 or through The Joint Commission web site’s online question form at: http://www.jointcommission.org/Standards/OnlineQuestionForm/.

**Performance Improvement (PI) and Performance Measurement (PM)**
Performance improvement is the continuous study and adaptation of a health care organization’s functions and processes to increase the probability of achieving desired outcomes and to better meet the needs of patients, clients, and other users of its services. Performance improvement is contingent upon reliable measurement and assessment in order to understand current performance and target areas for improvement.

A set of three standardized performance measures are utilized for health care staffing certification; however, staffing firms may also choose to collect data for additional non-standardized measures selected on their own to augment performance improvement activities related to the standardized measure set (e.g., client-specific requirements for file audits). The standardized measures in the set were identified and specified by The Joint Commission and external performance measurement experts. Standardized performance measures have precisely defined specifications and standardized data collection protocols, meet established evaluation criteria and can be uniformly adopted for use by all staffing firms. The three performance measures included in the standardized measure set are:

- HCSS-1: Do Not Return – Clinical
- HCSS-2: Do Not Return – Professional
- HCSS-3: Completeness of Personnel File

**At the time of the initial application** for certification, the health care staffing firm is required to have implemented data collection for the standardized measures. Measure specifications, data element definitions, data collection and reporting requirements, as well as other detailed measure information can be found in the HCSS Performance Measurement Implementation Guide, 2nd Edition available at: http://www.jointcommission.org/hcss_certification_program_performance_measurement_implementation_guide_2nd_edition/.

**At the time of the initial on-site review**, the firm will need to be prepared to discuss its performance improvement activities and present 4 months of data for each of the three
standardized measures. The firm should be able to discuss how data for these measures have been used to evaluate processes and/or outcomes and identify potential opportunities for improvement. In addition, the firm should describe any interventions and/or process modifications that may have been made based on measurement results, and explain any significant variations in the data. All PI activities need to be clearly documented.

How to Request a Health Care Staffing Services Initial Certification Review

A staffing firm that wishes to be certified by The Joint Commission should request access to the electronic Application for Certification by calling (630) 792-5291 or by emailing staffingcert@jointcommission.org.

The Application for Certification is valid for one year from the date submitted, which means you can submit your electronic application, and still have time to finish your preparations before the on-site review takes place. For initial reviews, the application is submitted with a non-refundable $1,700 deposit, which is applied to your certification fees.

On your Application for Certification, you may specify the month in which you would like the review to take place, and/or specific dates within that month when you would not like the review to take place. The Joint Commission will make every effort to accommodate your time request. The earlier you submit your request, the more likely it is that your specific month may be accommodated.

Once the Application for Certification is received, you will be assigned an Account Executive, who will:

- Answer your questions about review preparation, and help you through each step of the certification process
- Analyze your Application for Certification, and contact you if there are any questions or items requiring clarification
- Update changes to your demographic information, including address(es), contact name(s), etc.
- Assist you with other Joint Commission contacts and questions.

The Joint Commission schedules on-site reviews based on information provided in your Application for Certification. With the information provided, The Joint Commission determines the number of days required for a review, and the composition of the review team.

Approximately four weeks before the review, you will be notified of the date(s) of the initial review through your secure “The Joint Commission Connect” extranet site and you will find a sample review agenda, as well as a guide to the limited number of documents you will need to gather for the review. You will also receive notification of the reviewers’ names, bio and picture on your extranet page approximately 4 weeks before your review.
For a recertification review, your electronic application will be posted to your extranet site 6-9 months prior to your due date of review. You will need to review and submit the application to The Joint Commission. All recertification reviews will be unannounced except for those organizations that meet specific criteria. Please contact your Joint Commission Account Executive at (630) 792.3007 to determine if your staffing firm meets these criteria.

**Handling Changes During the Certification Cycle**

Your organization must notify The Joint Commission in writing within 30 calendar days if it undergoes a change that modifies the information reported in the Application for Certification. Information that must be reported includes:

- A change in ownership
- A change in location
- A significant increase or decrease in the volume of services
- The addition of a new type of service/program
- The acquisition of a new component
- The deletion of an existing service or component

The Joint Commission may schedule an additional review for a later date if its review team arrives at the organization and discovers that a change was not reported. The Joint Commission may also review any unreported services and sites addressed by its standards. In either event, there may be additional fees assessed. The Joint Commission will make the final certification decision for the organization only after reviewing all services provided by the organization for which The Joint Commission has standards.

**Review Scheduling**

The Joint Commission schedules reviews systematically and efficiently to keep certification fees to a minimum. Therefore, firms are encouraged to accept scheduled review dates. Initial reviews, that is, a firm’s first full certification review, must be scheduled within one year from the time The Joint Commission receives the organization’s electronic Application for Certification.

The Joint Commission tries to honor specifically-requested dates during which an organization prefers *not* to be reviewed. The staffing firm should include these specific dates with the completed Application for Certification, whenever possible. There may, however, be circumstances that prevent The Joint Commission from accommodating these dates.

**Postponement**

Circumstances may arise in which the health care staffing firm must postpone the scheduled review or wishes to cancel the review. To postpone or cancel a scheduled review, the staffing firm must provide at least 30 days advance notice, stating the reason(s) (see below) for the request. If the program requests a postponement less than 30 days before the scheduled start of the review, a *postponement fee may apply.*
A staffing firm should direct a request for a postponement to their Account Executive. A request to postpone may be granted if one or more of the following criteria are met:

- a natural disaster or another major unforeseen event occurs that totally or substantially disrupts operations;
- the staffing firm is involved in a major labor strike and has ceased normal operations
- the staffing firm is being moved to a new building on the day or days of the review.

**Certification Preparation**

It is very important that the health care staffing firm’s leadership encourage staff input and involvement in the process. Staff is an integral part of ongoing monitoring of compliance with the standards. Staff also play a primary role in implementing recommendations made by The Joint Commission reviewers for performance improvement opportunities—opportunities that may result in time and cost savings. Also as part of the on-site review, the reviewer will conduct interviews with client(s) and staff so The Joint Commission suggests that the staffing firm inform its client(s) and staff of a scheduled certification review.

The Joint Commission recommends that the firm prepare for certification by reviewing the standards manual; review process guide (this provides detailed descriptions of all on-site review activities) and conducting a “mock” certification review prior to the actual on-site review. Spend time evaluating each aspect of your service and activities. During the “mock” certification review, document areas of potential compliance or noncompliance.

Joint Commission Resources (JCR), a client-focused, expert resource for health care organizations, can also provide these “mock” reviews. JCR partners with organizations, providing consulting services, educational services, and publications to assist in improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of health care services, and to assist in meeting the accreditation and certification standards of The Joint Commission. JCR is a subsidiary of The Joint Commission, but provides services independently and confidentially, disclosing no information about its clients to The Joint Commission or others. Visit the JCR website at www.jcrinc.com for additional information on the services that are available.
## Suggested “Ready to Go” List

The following is a list of items that should be accessible throughout the onsite review. Please note that it is not necessary to prepare documentation or assemble it in any particular way for the review. Reviewers are interested in seeing the resources that staff reference in their day-to-day activity. These items do not need to be stand-alone documents; the items noted may represent sections of other documents. **Items with an asterisk (*) are those that will be needed as soon as possible following reviewer arrival.**

- Organization chart*
- Written code of business ethics*
- List of currently placed staff, including independent contractors when applicable, with an indication of the assignment setting (hospital, clinic, etc.), sorted by discipline, sorted by travel or per diem if applicable, and if travel, an indication of the state*
- List of current customers, with approximate number of placements in the last 4 months*
- Business license, if applicable*
- Marketing information*
- Contract with customer(s) template, if one is used
- Subcontract template, if one is used
- Field staff personnel records, as requested
- Field staff contract template (including independent contractors), if one is used
- Field staff handbook or documents routinely given to staff upon hire or re-hire
- Recruiting policies and procedures
- Credentialing policies and procedures
- Copies of job descriptions for each discipline placed
- Copies of staff skills competency checklist for each discipline placed
- Copies of performance evaluation tool for each discipline, if different
- Policies and procedures for work-related accidents, injuries, and safety/risk management
- Policies and procedures related to emergency management or business interruption
- Description of complaint/grievance process presented to customers and field staff
- Emergency management plan
- Policy on presentation of proof of identity
- HCSS standardized performance measure data, graphical analysis and reports
- Any additional performance improvement data displays, action plans, etc.

The requested information will provide us the opportunity to more fully understand your organization and services, and allow for an efficient and focused on-site review. Please contact us at *(630) 792-3007* if you have any questions about the Application for Certification process or requirements, or the Get Ready Checklist.
## Preparation Timeline

### Organizations Requesting a First Review

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<th>The Joint Commission Activity</th>
<th>Your Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>6 months before the preferred month of your review</td>
<td>Call (630) 792-5291 to obtain access to the electronic Application for Certification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upon receipt of your call</td>
<td>Application for Certification access and the <em>Health Care Staffing Services Certification Review Process Guide</em> will be emailed.</td>
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</table>
| Upon receipt of your Application for Certification and deposit | • You are assigned an Account Executive whose name will be posted to your extranet page.  
• You will be mailed a complimentary copy of the *Health Care Staffing Services Certification Manual*.  
• You are given access to a complimentary 6 month online subscription to *Perspectives*: The Official Newsletter of The Joint Commission via U.S. mail. |
| | Staff member(s) with knowledge of your organization’s services and sites should complete the electronic Application for Certification and the $1,700 deposit should be paid to The Joint Commission. |
| | Initiate data collection for each of the three standardized performance measures. |

### Organizations Requesting Re-certification

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<th>Your Activity</th>
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<td>6 to 9 months before the due date of your next review</td>
<td>Notification via email that the Application for Certification is due for an update in preparation for the next unannounced on-site review. All re-certification reviews will be unannounced, with a few exceptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within 4 weeks of receiving the Application for Certification</td>
<td>Staff member(s) with knowledge of your organization’s services and sites will need to complete and submit the electronic Application for Certification. No deposit is necessary with the re-certification application.</td>
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<td>Timing</td>
<td>The Joint Commission Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>45 days before initial review</td>
<td>Scheduling of review date(s) and name of reviewer(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 weeks before review</td>
<td>Reviewer(s) arrives for on-site review. At conclusion of the review, you will receive a summary of review findings, which details non-compliant areas that need to be addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day of Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 10 days after your review</td>
<td>An invoice for review fees is posted to your extranet site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 10 days after your review</td>
<td>Staffing firm will receive a final report posted on their extranet page from The Joint Commission. If there are Requirements for Improvement (RFIs), these are addressed within 45 or 60 days after the completion of the on-site review via an Evidence of Standards Compliance (ESC) or within 10 days via a request for clarification of findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 7 weeks after your review</td>
<td>If the ESC is accepted, a certification decision is rendered and the award letter and the certificate order form are mailed. Additional materials may be included, such as a publicity kit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After your certification decision is rendered</td>
<td>Your organization’s certification status and contact information will be posted to Quality Check at <a href="http://www.qualitycheck.org">www.qualitycheck.org</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four months after the certification decision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Each certified organization is given access to Perspectives, which is the official source for updates to standards, policies, and procedures. (Also available online at <a href="http://www.jcrinc.com">www.jcrinc.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 and 24 months after your on-site review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 and 24 months after your on-site review</td>
<td>Review performance measure data questions at 12 months (intra-cycle) and again at 24 months. Responses may be updated at any time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intracycle Event</td>
<td>Discuss the results of your organization’s performance against the three standardized measures (monthly data), your analysis of your performance (PM Data Report), and your organization’s ongoing approach to performance improvement (PI Plan) during intracycle conference call.</td>
<td>Formally submit CMIP tool and participate in intracycle conference call with reviewer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-certification reviews are due biennially</td>
<td>Performance measurement data will be reviewed on-site during the recertification review.</td>
<td>Present 24 months of data with analysis: performance measure data reports, monthly data points depicted in graphs and tables, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varies, depending on publication schedule</td>
<td>One complimentary copy of the updated Health Care Staffing Certification Manual will be sent to each certified organization after receipt of your re-certification application.</td>
<td>Staff should review the new certification manual or supplement to act on new and modified standards, scoring guidelines, policies, and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 30 days of any significant organizational changes</td>
<td>A decision about appropriate follow-up will be made based upon the type and extent of the change.</td>
<td>The organization must notify The Joint Commission (via letter, fax, or e-mail) of any significant change in the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 9 months before the due date of your next on-site review</td>
<td>Notification via email that the Application for Certification is due for an update in preparation for the next unannounced on-site review. All re-certification reviews will be unannounced, with a few exceptions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The On-Site Review Process

The purpose of The Joint Commission certification review is to assess the extent of an organization’s compliance with applicable Joint Commission standards. Health Care Staffing firms undergoing their first review need to demonstrate compliance with the standards including four months of performance measure data for each standardized measure.

Understanding the staffing firm and assessing compliance is accomplished through a number of methods including the following:

- receipt of verbal information concerning implementation of standards, or examples of their implementation, enabling analysis of compliance;
- on-site observation by The Joint Commission reviewers; and
• review of documents that demonstrate compliance and assist in orienting reviewers to the organization’s operation.

As a requirement of certification participation, the staffing firm must provide accurate information about its services and its compliance with the HCSS standards and performance measurement requirements.

The reviewer(s) visits the HCSS firm on the scheduled date(s) and according to the prepared agenda. The reviewer(s) may ask to interview any staff during the review or request additional information. The Joint Commission’s confidentiality policy forbids The Joint Commission from releasing information gathered from an HCSS firm during the certification process.

An important characteristic of The Joint Commission review process is on-site education conducted by the reviewer. This support occurs throughout the review as suggestions are offered for approaches and strategies that may help the organization better meet the intent of the standards and, more importantly, improve performance.

The on-site review consists of the following steps, which are explained in the sample agenda below:
• Opening Conference and Planning Session
• Staffing Firm Overview
• Contract/Formal Agreement Review
• Personnel File Review
• Competency Assessment and Credentialing Process System Tracers
• Individual Staff Tracers
• Field Staff and Customer Phone Calls
• Review of Performance Measure Data and Reports
• Issue Resolution, Preliminary Report, and Exit Conference

The Review Process Guide describes each activity of The Joint Commission onsite certification review and should be used for review preparation. To obtain a copy of this document, please call (630) 792-5291.

NOTE: If, during the review, the reviewer(s) identify any condition they believe poses an immediate threat to public or patient safety, the reviewer must notify the staffing firm’s Chief Executive Officer and The Joint Commission’s Central Office. The Joint Commission decides next steps based on an assessment of the situation.

The reviewer(s) will confer with the health care staffing services program leadership team at a leadership Exit Conference at the end of each review. During this conference, the reviewer(s) will provide a summary of review findings, citing strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. This information is strictly preliminary and should not be considered final until reviewed by The Joint Commission’s Central Office staff and a final certification report is issued.
## Sample HCSS Review Agenda, One Reviewer for One Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Organization Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 45 minutes starting at approximately 8:00 a.m. | Reviewer Arrival, Opening Conference, Orientation to the Organization  
- Introductions  
- Joint Commission & Certification overview  
- Agenda review | Certification review coordinator, leadership and others at the discretion of the organization |
| 20 minutes                                | Reviewer Planning Session  
*Please note: The reviewer needs a list of customers where clinical staff are currently working or have worked.*  
- Reviewer selection of contracts/agreements for review—a **minimum of six contracts/agreements** will be identified  
- These contracts/agreements need to be available for the Contract/Formal Agreement Review session  
- Reviewer selection of customers for contact—**a minimum of six customers** will be identified to participate in a brief phone call with the reviewer. The reviewer will identify the timeframe during which he or she would like to place or take these phone calls to facilitate the firm’s scheduling. Calls will be taken in private by the reviewer.  
*Please note: The reviewer needs a roster of clinical staff who are currently placed or available for placement, sorted by discipline*  
- Reviewer selection of clinical staff records and tracers—a **minimum of 30** clinical staff will be identified  
- Files for these individuals need to be available for the Personnel File Review Session  
- Reviewer selection of clinical staff for contact—Three to seven clinical staff will be identified to participate in a brief phone call with the reviewer. The reviewer will identify the timeframe to place or take phone calls to facilitate the firm’s scheduling. Calls will be taken in private by the reviewer.  
*Office tour – A brief guided walk-through to orient the reviewer to the firm’s operations and office layout.* | Certification review coordinator |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Organization Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Staffing Firm Overview</td>
<td>Leader(s) and individual(s) responsible for these functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Contract/Formal Agreement Review</td>
<td>Individual(s) familiar with content and responsible for formal agreements/contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Competence Assessment &amp; Credentialing Session</td>
<td>Individuals responsible for managing and performing these processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Personnel File Review</td>
<td>Individual(s) with authorized access to files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Reviewer Lunch</td>
<td>Individual(s) who can facilitate the file review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Reviewer</td>
<td>Organization Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Individual Clinical Staff Tracers</td>
<td>Individual(s) who can step the reviewer through a clinical staff person’s experience with the firm from point of first contact through recruitment, hiring, orientation, first placement, and initial performance evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 minutes</td>
<td>- Personnel File Review ...continued</td>
<td>Individual(s) who can assist the reviewer in establishing phone contact with clinical staff and customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Phone calls with clinical staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Phone calls with customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: Reviewers may conduct additional Clinical Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tracers if time is available after completing phone calls and file review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Issue Resolution &amp; Reviewer Report Preparation</td>
<td>Certification review coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes ending at approximately 4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Organization Exit Conference</td>
<td>Program and clinical leadership and others at the discretion of the organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Duration of the Certification Decision**
A Certificate of Distinction in Health Care Staffing Services is valid for a two year time frame unless revoked by The Joint Commission. The award is effective upon successful submission of an ESC and when a certification decision has been rendered.
After the On-Site Review

The Certification Decision
The final certification decision is based on your firm’s compliance with The Joint Commission standards. When requirements for improvement are identified during the on-site review, you must submit an Evidence of Standards Compliance (ESC) report within 45 or 60 days following the posting of the Official Certification Report. This report describes the actions the program took (not planning to take) to bring itself into compliance with the standard or clarifies why the program believes it was in compliance with the standard at the time of the review. An Evidence of Standards Compliance must address compliance at the Element of Performance level.

Some Elements of Performances will also require that organizations include a Measure of Success (MOS) in the Evidence of Standards Compliance. A MOS is a numerical or quantifiable measure, usually related to an audit, which determines if an action was effective and is being sustained. In the initial Evidence of Standards Compliance submission, a program will identify its target MOS. Four months after the Evidence of Standards Compliance is approved, the organization submits aggregate data demonstrating whether each MOS was reached.

Measures of Success are evaluated as follows: performance in the 90-100% range (score of 2); performance in the 80-89% range (score of 1); performance at 79% or below (score of 0).

When a firm successfully meets The Joint Commission’s requirements, it will be awarded a certification decision in one of the following categories of certification:

Certified
This decision indicates that the firm is in compliance with all standards at the time of the on-site review or has successfully addressed all requirements for improvement in an Evidence of Standards Compliance within 45 or 60 days following the posting of the Official Certification Report.

Certification with Follow-up Review
The staffing firm is not in compliance with specific standards that require a follow-up review, typically within the range from 30 days to 6 months. The staffing firm also must successfully address the identified problem area(s) in an ESC submission.

Contingent Certification
The staffing firm fails to successfully address all requirements of the Certification with Follow-up Review decision and/or does not have a required license or similar issue at the time of review. In most cases, a follow-up review in 30 days will be required.
**Preliminary Denial of Certification**

There is justification to deny certification to the firm as evidenced by:

- An Immediate Threat to Health or Safety for patients or the public, and/or
- Failure to resolve the requirements of Certification with Follow-up Review after two opportunities (in most cases), and/or
- Failure to resolve the requirements of a Contingent Certification, and/or
- Significant noncompliance with Joint Commission standards.

The decision is subject to review and appeal by the organization prior to the determination to deny certification.

**Denial of Certification**

Certification is denied when certification is withdrawn by The Joint Commission, or when all review and appeal opportunities have been exhausted. A denial of certification decision is also rendered for nonpayment of applicable fees.

**The Certification Award**

The Joint Commission provides each health care staffing services firm with a Certificate of Distinction at the time certification is granted. There is no charge for the certificate. Additional copies of certificates may be purchased by contacting the assigned Joint Commission Business Coordinator at (630) 792.5862.

The certificate and all copies remain The Joint Commission's property. They must be returned if:

- the program is issued a new certificate reflecting a name change, or
- the program’s certification is withdrawn or denied for any reason.

A health care staffing firm certified by The Joint Commission must be accurate in describing to the public the nature and meaning of its certification award. Therefore, a health care staffing firm must not misrepresent its certification status or the services to which the certification award applies. The Joint Commission will supply each firm receiving certification with proper guidelines for announcing the certification award.

If a certified health care staffing firm is purchased by another firm or is physically or organizationally merged with another firm, The Joint Commission may decide that the health care staffing firm must undergo an additional review. Barring exceptional circumstances, The Joint Commission continues certification of the firm undergoing the kind of changes described above until it determines whether a full certification review is necessary.

**Intracycle Evaluation Event**

All organizations participating in the certification process are required to collect, report, and monitor their performance relative to a set of standardized measures on an ongoing basis.
The Certification Measure Information Process (CMIP) tool is used to assist certified organizations with the data collection, reporting and monitoring requirements associated with the standardized measures. The CMIP tool is available on your organization’s secure The Joint Commission Connect extranet site. Each certified organization can access The Performance Measure (PM) Data Report and statistical process control (SPC) charts within the CMIP tool to perform an annual analysis of its performance relative to each standardized performance measure.

A mid-point (intracycle) evaluation of the performance measurement activities will be conducted via conference call with a Joint Commission Reviewer which will take place as close as possible to the one-year anniversary point of the current two-year certification cycle. The call will be scheduled by the Reviewer with the person identified in the “Intracycle Conference Call Contact Information” section of the CMIP tool for a time that is convenient to both parties involved.

During the conference call, the Reviewer will discuss the results of your organization’s performance against the three standardized measures (monthly data), your analysis of your performance (PM Data Report), and your organization’s ongoing approach to performance improvement (PI Plan). Participation in the intracycle conference call is mandatory for all staffing organizations. This call is your organization’s opportunity to have an interactive discussion with the Joint Commission Reviewer to assure you are on the right track relative to performance measurement. There are no negative outcomes to the intracycle event, unless the Reviewer identifies that your organization has not actively performed performance measurement and improvement activities since the time of the most recently completed initial or recertification review.

Your organization will receive an automated email to the primary certification contact and the CEO approximately 3 months in advance of the one-year anniversary date of your last initial or recertification review. You will have 30 days to enter any missing monthly data points for any of the three measures, complete the performance measure (PM) data report for each measure, and review your performance improvement plan for any updates. Once everything has been entered or updated, you will use the submission checklist section of the CMIP tool to formally submit the CMIP tool to The Joint Commission for the intracycle event. If the tool is not submitted on time, your organization will receive an email reminder to submit the tool or risk having your certification decision changed.

**Promoting Your Certification**

Publicize your achievement of national certification and The Joint Commission’s “Gold Seal of Approval™” by notifying customers and staff. The Joint Commission offers a free publicity kit that includes:

- Suggestions for celebrating certification
- Guidelines for publicizing Joint Commission Certification
- Frequently asked questions
- Sample news releases
- Fact sheets
- Gold Seal of Approval™ graphics
Information about your certification status will be posted to www.qualitycheck.org.

**Performance Measure Trend Reports**

Joint Commission certified Health Care Staffing organizations can obtain feedback on their performance on standardized performance measures through the Certification Measurement Information Process (CMIP) **Performance Measure Trend Reports**.

The Performance Measure Trend Reports provide firms with the opportunity to:
- use standardized performance measure data for ongoing internal performance assessment and improvement activities
- see national and state rates trend for each of the self-reported standardized measures

Standardized performance measures submitted through CMIP have precisely-defined specifications and standardized data collection protocols. These specifications and protocols are described in the Performance Measure Implementation Guide.

Performance Measure Trend Reports summarize performance measure information at the individual measure level. The reports also include information on overall performance on the measures at both the national and state level. Firms should use the CMIP Trend Reports as a visual to identify trends and variations in the data that they have collected and reported to the Joint Commission. These reports are available after the firm has submitted 12 months of data. The charts are a data analysis tool that will assist certified firms in meeting the elements of performance for standard PM.4 (the program/firm analyzes the data it collects; the program/firm uses appropriate data analysis tools; the program/firm makes improvements based on the analysis of its data), and also assists them when completing the Performance Measure Data Report (PM Data Report) questions due at the time of intra-cycle and recertification.

The reports are updated and made available on each program’s secure Joint Commission extranet site approximately five months after the close of a calendar quarter (March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1) of each year.
Resources for Health Care Staffing Services Certification

The Joint Commission and its affiliate, Joint Commission Resources (JCR), offer a wide variety of products and services to clarify standards and help you prepare for certification.

The Standards Interpretation Group (SIG) is responsible for answering specific questions about any standards and how they are interpreted. This is a no-cost service that you can access over the phone at (630) 792-5900 or through The Joint Commission website at www.jointcommission.org. Be sure to request assistance from a health care staffing services specialist.

The Joint Commission website contains frequently asked questions (FAQs) for many areas of potential concern for health care staffing firms. Many of these questions are posted by the Standards Interpretation Group, so you may be able to find your answers by checking the FAQs before calling or e-mailing SIG.

Questions about data collection for the standardized measures may be submitted to http://manual.jointcommission.org. Frequently asked questions and responses specific to performance measurement can be found in this database.

Business Development Staff works especially with organizations preparing for their first certification. Any questions that you have about the overall certification process and your preparation efforts should be directed to (630) 792-5291.

Joint Commission Resources (JCR)
JCR products can be ordered through their web site, www.jcrinc.com or by calling Customer Service at (877) 223-6866.

Publications

2012 Health Care Staffing Services Certification Manual
This is the official book of standards for health care staffing firms, which includes all the information you need to meet certification requirements. Staffing firms who apply for certification receive one copy of this book as part of their application fee.
Price: $100 Order code: HCSS12
Appendix A
Health Care Staffing Services
NOTIFICATION OF ON-SITE REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Joint Commission has an obligation to evaluate and take into consideration in its certification decisions all relevant information about a staffing firm's compliance with applicable Joint Commission standards. The Joint Commission, therefore, recommends that health care staffing services seeking certification notify all personnel, field staff and customers, who might have such information, of a scheduled certification visit by The Joint Commission.

Notification of an upcoming certification review should include:

- The date of the review for initial reviews or approximate time frame for re-certification reviews
- A message indicating that the certification review process involves the reviewer conducting brief, phone interviews on the day of the review with randomly selected field staff and customers and that their participation would be appreciated
- The methods that individuals may use to provide relevant information directly to The Joint Commission, such as contacting the Office of Quality Monitoring at (800) 944-6610 or via email at complaint@jointcommission.org

The staffing service may use whatever communication means they determine will be most effective in notifying personnel, field staff and customers of the opportunity to contribute information relevant to the staffing firm's certification review. Methods can include posting notices in public eating areas or on bulletin boards near office entrances, sending notices with paychecks to field staff, or sending email messages, newsletters, or billing statements to customers. Use of the firm's existing, proven, communication methods is encouraged.

When anyone inquires about the certification review, the staffing firm must inform the person(s) of the review date(s) and of the fact that he or she may contact The Joint Commission with information they believe to be pertinent to the certification review process.

Office of Quality Monitoring
The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

Or
Faxed to (630) 792-5636

Or
E-mailed to complaint@jointcommission.org

Staffing firms scheduled for an announced review are required to notify personnel, field staff and customers at least 30 days in advance of the scheduled certification review or promptly after receiving notice of the scheduled review if such notice arrives fewer than 30 days prior to the scheduled review date.
Sample
NOTIFICATION OF ON-SITE REVIEW

The Joint Commission will conduct a certification review of
____ (Insert name of staffing firm)____ on ____(Insert the certification review date)___.

The purpose of the review will be to evaluate the staffing service’s compliance with nationally
established Joint Commission standards. The review results will be used to determine whether,
and the conditions under which certification should be awarded to the staffing firm.

There are two methods for field staff and customers to provide The Joint Commission with
information regarding performance of the staffing firm:

1. The certification review process involves the reviewer conducting brief, phone interviews
on the day of the review with randomly selected field staff and customers. The purpose
of these interviews is to collect experience-based data regarding the staffing firm’s
performance from those individuals and organizations that are in frequent contact. A staffing
firm representative will initiate the contact with field staff and customers to schedule a
convenient time for the reviewer to call and ask a few questions. If contacted, your
participation and input would be appreciated, if at all possible.

2. The Joint Commission standards relate to quality and safety of care issues. Anyone
believing that he or she has pertinent and valid information about such matters related to
this staffing firm may provide input to The Joint Commission by submitting a complaint to the
Office of Quality Monitoring at:

Office of Quality Monitoring
The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
Or
Faxed to (630) 792-5636
Or
E-mailed to complaint@jointcommission.org

Any information presented, regardless of the format will be carefully evaluated for relevance to
the certification process.

This notice is provided in accordance with The Joint Commission’s requirements.

Date of Notice:___________________________________