

# Ambulatory Health Care Surveyor Spotlight



## Q&A with Angela M. Thompson, RN, MSN Ed

Angela has decades of experience working in ambulatory surgery centers (ASC). She has been employed in the ambulatory surgical setting for the majority of her career. In this setting, she has had many roles — from operating room staff nurse to Director of Nursing to Regional Quality Coordinator.

Angela feels that the various roles she has had in the health care industry have given her the opportunity to work with many different personality types and manage them all with tact and professionalism. This has surely contributed to her success as a Joint Commission surveyor!

### **Q: Tell the readers about your role as a Joint Commission ambulatory health care surveyor.**

**A:** While I have been a Joint Commission surveyor for only a little over a year, my experience in ASCs means that I am attuned to how the ASC world works. When I walk into an ASC as a surveyor, I feel that I am right in my wheelhouse. Knowing my background puts the ASC staff at ease and makes the survey process run much more smoothly. They know that I know what I am looking for and they feel that they can talk to me as a colleague. I also feel that kindness and a soft tone really go a long way in working with health care organizations.

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**Q: What made you decide to become a Joint Commission surveyor?**

**A:** I have always been a black-and-white type of person, always believing that doing the right thing is extremely important, especially during surgery. I want to promote safety and best practices around the country. And I like to learn from other facilities; I soak up new knowledge like a sponge. Being a surveyor is awesome — this is absolutely my dream job!



**Q. How have your previous roles prepared you to be an ASC surveyor?**

**A:** Because of my experience, I know exactly how an ASC works and what to look for during a survey. ASCs are very different from hospitals. Knowing that I have worked in an ambulatory surgery setting puts the staff members of the organization at ease. They feel that I am one of them and they can confide in me. I am like a trusted comrade to them.



**Q. Is there a particular survey experience that stands out in your mind?**

**A:** Every survey that I have conducted always has a moment that stands out, whether it is something that I have pointed out or something that the staff has done or said. While each survey is unique in its own right, there was one that I will never forget.

A physician in a relatively poor community told me that he was open to any and all advice I could offer. He had a good heart and wanted desperately to help his community. We worked hard together; the process was very collaborative. I pointed out things he was doing that were not necessarily compliant, but we fixed them and got it all straightened away.

At the end of the survey, he cried; he had worked so hard. It was a sweet moment and I assured him that he would be fine. He is doing a great job serving his community, and I was happy to be a part of that.



**Q. What do you like most about working for The Joint Commission?**

**A:** I like talking to people from various areas around the country. I enjoy seeing different things and sharing best practices. The learning that I do on the job is fantastic and being able to take what I learn in one location and teach it to people in another is wonderful.

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**Q: During your past work experience, were you involved in any Joint Commission surveys?**

**A:** Yes, several of the facilities in which I worked were Joint Commission accredited. I was also present during some surveys performed by other agencies.



**Q: What sets Joint Commission surveyors apart from other surveyors?**

**A:** We really care about working collaboratively with our organizations; we really care about the team effort. And we really care about the patient on the table. We do what’s best for the patient by working to create a plan with the organization that emphasizes best practices.

While some may think that Joint Commission surveyors are nit-picky, we’re really not; we are only being thorough. We go to great lengths to explain where we’re coming from and exactly why we’re citing the organization. When you explain the “why” to the organization, the lightbulb turns on and they truly get it – the “aha moment”!

When I cite something, I always open up a discussion about the issue. I answer questions, and even ask a Joint Commission resource to verify that I am not being “over the top.” I want to be thorough without being nit-picky. I try to give the organization the benefit of the doubt. You need common sense to be a good surveyor.



**Q: How has the Joint Commission survey process evolved over the years?**

**A:** When I was a young nurse and we heard that The Joint Commission was in our facility, many of the nurses would run and hide or pretend to be on the phone. But I wanted to ask questions and discover how to do things better. The survey process has evolved to be more about learning and information and less about citations and punishment. Today’s surveyors are kinder, warmer and definitely more inviting.



**Q: Is there anything else you want to add about your experience working at The Joint Commission?**

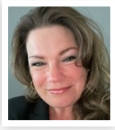
**A:** Reading the evaluations from organizations I have surveyed is validating. The positive reviews keep me going!



**Q: What advice would you offer an ASC preparing for its first Joint Commission survey?**

**A:** Before the survey begins, be sure to check out your extranet site and use all available resources; get your paperwork together before the survey; conduct some in-house preparatory surveys; and perform a building tour. During the survey, do not be afraid to ask questions. There are no silly or stupid questions. Believe me, we’ve seen and heard it all!

We won’t bite; we’re here to help you. Believe me when I say that we’re always on your team! Our purpose is to improve the safety and quality of health care for your patients – that’s the bottom line. We want to help make your facility the shining star of your community.



**Angela M. Thompson, RN, MSN Ed**  
Ambulatory Care Surveyor  
THE JOINT COMMISSION

Angela Thompson currently resides in a northwest suburb of Chicago with her family. She is a full-time surveyor and surveys ambulatory organizations throughout the United States within the full scope of the Joint Commission's ambulatory programs.

Ms. Thompson earned a Master of Science in Nursing with Education Specialization at Capella University and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Truman State University. She has been a nurse for over 22 years.

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