

Spotlight on Success



With five locations in Northwest Ohio, Unison Health is a leading resource for people seeking access to behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, and primary healthcare. Unison Health has been accredited by The Joint Commission for more than a decade — and, according to Director of Quality Improvement Amy Kobold, it makes a difference. “We’re in a pretty competitive environment,” says Kobold. “Toledo’s not a huge market. But we are the only Joint Commission accredited agency in that area, and I think that’s really set us apart from our competitors because our standards are so much higher.”

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AMY KOBOLD
DIRECTOR OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
UNISON HEALTH

Q. TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR ACCREDITATION JOURNEY.

A. Well, I've been through three surveys, all in different roles. My first survey, I was a clinician; my second, I was a Program Manager; and our most recent, I was a Clinical Director. Now I'm the Quality Improvement Director so I'll be taking the lead. I think my variable experience is a huge benefit, because I've been able to see it from so many perspectives.

Q. WHAT'S THE PRIMARY BENEFIT OF BEING ACCREDITED BY THE JOINT COMMISSION?

A. We've been Joint Commission accredited for over a decade and it's still regarded as the gold seal of approval. It's the highest standard of excellence that you can have in the field. We actually had a new CEO come in a couple of years ago that asked questions about our accreditation and why we pursued it, and it was very easy to convince him that it was the best choice, and that it was a competitive advantage when it came to our marketing. It's a mark of excellence. And it's known within the industry, within our local mental health boards, and at the state level. Even our clients know that accreditation means we strive for excellence.

Q. DOES HAVING JOINT COMMISSION ACCREDITATION HELP YOU WITH YOUR PAYORS?

A. In Ohio, we're going through what Medicaid is calling Behavioral Health Redesign, and part of that is managed care carve-ins, where all the behavioral health services are being carved into managed care. So those will be our payors next year. We're very confident that having The Joint Commission's accreditation and that gold seal next to our name is going to be a huge advantage for us when it comes to contracting.

Q. TALK ABOUT THE SURVEY PROCESS. WHAT'S IT LIKE WHEN THE JOINT COMMISSION COMES AND DOES A SURVEY?

A. We've found that our surveyors have been great people to ask questions of — very collaborative. They're there to do a job, but they're also there to be a support. Our most recent survey was about a year ago, just as an add-on for a new service. Our surveyor was just so friendly. He sent follow-up emails in the weeks after giving us some tips and resources. So the relationship lasted only for a day, but then it was really a huge asset to us in the months following.

Q. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO BE CONTINUOUSLY SURVEY READY?

A. Being continuously survey ready is a challenge — but it makes things so much easier when survey time comes around. If there are just a few things that you need to clean up, or recheck on, or update, it takes a lot of the burden off of preparing for a survey if you've maintained standards compliance throughout the year. I found The Joint Commission's focused standards assessment tool to be a huge support in making sure that we're continuously compliant. Sometimes things can fall off your radar and that kind of brings it back to you on an annual basis, rather than every three years.

Q. WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH THE JOINT COMMISSION?

A. One of the best parts about The Joint Commission for me is having our rep so quickly available. When I've reached out to them with questions, they are always quick to give an answer. And the standards interpretation group has been very receptive and responsive to questions. I don't ever feel like I'm floating on an island trying to figure this out on my own. The Joint Commission's customer service is excellent and that's made it easy to maintain compliance.

Q. WHY WOULD YOU RECOMMEND JOINT COMMISSION ACCREDITATION TO A COLLEAGUE?

A. I would recommend The Joint Commission because I truly believe it's a competitive advantage. It raises the bar in your facility and it improves patient outcomes. It forces our staff to keep their eyes focused. And in the world of behavioral health, it's really easy to get distracted by the crisis of the day and putting out fires. So it is an ever-present reminder of what we're working towards — and that's excellence.

OUR RESULTS



IMPROVED PATIENT CARE

Compliance with high standards helps us improve patient outcomes.



EXPANDED CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES

The Joint Commission's reputation has helped expand our contracting opportunities.



LEARNING BEST PRACTICES

Collaborative surveyors bring tips and new ideas to our organization.



RESPONSIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Helpful customer service makes the process easier.



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Joint Commission accreditation is a mark of excellence that sets us apart from other agencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON JOINT COMMISSION BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE AND HUMAN SERVICES ACCREDITATION. VISIT US AT WWW.JOINTCOMMISSION.ORG/BHC