

→ Accreditation

Learn more about new Assisted Living Community Accreditation Program

A new Assisted Living Community (ALC) Accreditation Program has launched to help assisted living organizations deliver consistent and reliable care for residents. The Joint Commission began accepting applications for accreditation on July 1.



There are more than 30,000 ALCs in the United States, serving more than 800,000 residents. With growth in recent years, ALCs have been increasingly shifting from a mostly hospitality-based environment to a more health care-focused setting by offering services for medication management, skilled nursing, and dementia care. This shift has highlighted the need for national, consensus-based standards and accreditation.

The Joint Commission's ALC Accreditation standards were developed with consideration of scientific evidence and best practices, as well as state regulations and Life Safety Codes. Experts in the field of geriatrics, dementia care, rehabilitation, infection control and senior housing were actively engaged in a collaborative effort to design standards that align with quality care delivery and safe practices. In addition to an extensive internal review of the standards by subject matter experts, feedback and expert guidance were received from learning visits, a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), Standards Review Panel/TAP field review, public field review, and pilot testing.

The standards address:

- Environment
- Staffing
- Emergency management
- Dementia care
- Medication management
- Provision of care and services
- Process improvement

In addition to the standards, the ALC Accreditation Program requires organizations to track and report on five standardized performance measures:

- Off-label antipsychotic drug use
- Resident falls
- Resident preferences and goals of care
- Advanced care plan/surrogate decisionmaker
- Staff stability

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“The Joint Commission is pleased to launch a new accreditation program, the first care continuum expansion in more than 20 years,” said Gina Zimmermann, Executive Director, Nursing Care Center and Assisted Living Community Services, The Joint Commission. “We are excited to offer the Assisted Living Community Accreditation Program to help organizations provide a safe living environment for their residents. Accreditation is an important marker to help demonstrate organizations’ commitment to providing safe and quality treatment and services.”

The new standards appear in the March 2021 E-dition® of the *Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Assisted Living Communities*. Organizations may view the standards by requesting a [free 90-day trial](#) of E-dition.

[Learn more.](#)

Top 5 most challenging NCC requirements for 2020

The Joint Commission collects data on organizations’ compliance with standards, National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs), and Accreditation and Certification Participation Requirements to identify trends and focus education on challenging requirements.

The table below identifies the Top 5 Joint Commission requirements identified most frequently as “not compliant” during surveys and reviews for nursing care centers from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2020. Fewer surveys were conducted in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. However, Joint Commission surveyors were able to identify Requirements for Improvement (RFIs) in key areas for improvement.

For more information, see the May issue of *Perspectives* or the [Standards Frequently Asked Questions](#). (Contact: Standards Interpretation Group, 630-792-5900 or [online question form](#))

Nursing Care Centers		
1	HR.02.01.04: The organization permits licensed independent practitioners to provide care, treatment, and services.	EP 5
2	IC.02.01.01: The organization implements its infection prevention and control plan.	EP 1
3	EC.02.02.01: The organization manages risks related to hazardous materials and waste.	EP 5
4	HR.02.01.04: The organization permits licensed independent practitioners to provide care, treatment, and services.	EP 1
5	MM.03.01.01: The organization safely stores medications.	EP 7
5	PC.01.03.01: The organization plans the patient’s or resident’s care.	EP 1
5	WT.04.01.01: The organization performs quality control checks for waived testing on each procedure.	EP 4

Effective Jan. 1, 2022: New, revised Performance Improvement accreditation standards

Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, The Joint Commission will implement new and revised Performance Improvement (PI) and Leadership (LD) accreditation standards for its Nursing Care Center Accreditation Program.

During its research, The Joint Commission found that there is a wide range of capabilities and execution strategies across health care organizations in terms of monitoring quality and improving performance. However, two common themes emerged among organizations with successful improvement programs:

- They adopted an established improvement methodology and used the associated tools in their efforts.
- They developed and maintained relevant and manageable plans for monitoring quality and prioritizing improvement initiatives.

These revisions factor in those themes and strengthen the link between leadership priorities and goal setting, as well as planning organizational quality assessment and performance improvement efforts.

A [R3 Report](#) also was published detailing the rationale and research behind the requirements.

[View](#) the prepublication standards for nursing care centers.

Revisions made to Accreditation Participation Requirements

Effective Jan. 1, 2022, The Joint Commission has approved revisions to its Accreditation Participation Requirements (APR) Standard APR.04.01.01 for its Assisted Living Community Accreditation Program.

These revisions include:

- Updates to align with current ORYX requirements.
- A deletion of an element of performance to reduce redundancy.
- Improved language consistency across programs.

[View](#) the prepublication standards.

Effective January 2022: New water management requirements

A new standard on water management programs that addresses Legionella and other waterborne pathogens will be effective for Joint Commission-accredited nursing care centers on Jan. 1, 2022.

Currently, Environment of Care (EC) Standard EC.02.05.01, element of performance (EP) 6 for nursing care centers requires organizations to minimize pathogenic biological agents in cooling towers, domestic hot- and cold-water systems, and other aerosolizing water systems. This EP will continue to be scored until Dec. 31, 2021, and will then be deleted. The Joint Commission will be providing additional guidance and education later this year.

[View](#) the prepublication standards.

New machine learning technology for survey consistency launches

Earlier this year, The Joint Commission launched its Machine Learning for Survey Consistency technology across all its accreditation and certification programs, including its Nursing Care Center and Assisted Living Community accreditation programs. This new technology continuously analyzes data using artificial intelligence (AI) to identify data relationships and essentially learn from data gathered from years of validated survey and review reports.

Using an expanded data set — including previously vetted and scored findings — Joint Commission field staff now have an advanced capability to conduct keyword or phrase searches for appropriate standards or elements of performance (EPs) to determine how a finding should be scored. As such, machine learning will improve the consistency and accuracy of survey and review findings, while also creating time-saving efficiencies for field staff as they score findings.

Previously, only a small fraction of data was leveraged as “searchable” to associate a finding with a standard or EP. With the new technology, all remaining vetted data are available and searchable — prompting the appropriate standard and EP to appear in the Top 5 of choices more than 80% of the time. The machine learning integration will promote the most consistent and accurate accreditation and certification results for health care organizations across all settings. In addition, the efficacy level will improve as the machine learning technology matures with continuous learning from additional data available for analyses.

Joint Commission field staff are currently using the technology, integrated as part of a mobile application, for all types of surveys and reviews — including on-site, off-site and hybrid. Organizations do not need to take any action to have the new technology apply to their upcoming Joint Commission survey or review.

In an episode of Take 5 with The Joint Commission, Kin Lee, Chief Information and Enterprise Security Officer, and Emily J. Wells, Project Director, Surveyor Management and Development in Accreditation and Certification Operations, talk about the new technology and how it will impact surveys.

[Listen](#) to the podcast. [11:16] (Contact: Kin Lee, klee@jointcommission.org, Emily Wells, ewells@jointcommission.org)

SAFER® Dashboard launches for NCC, Assisted Living Community accreditation programs

Earlier this year, The Joint Commission launched the *SAFER*[®] Dashboard for all its accredited health care organizations, including the Nursing Care Center Accreditation Program. The dashboard is a self-serve data analytic tool that allows organizations to view all their survey data and Joint Commission national comparison data in one place. The *SAFER*[®] Dashboard is also available to organizations accredited under the newly launched Assisted Living Community Accreditation Program.

The dashboard is accessible on an organization's *Joint Commission Connect*[®] extranet site. Initial access will be given to the chief executive officer and primary accreditation contact. Security administrators in the organization may grant access to additional users as needed.

All information contained in the Final Accreditation Report is available on the *SAFER* Dashboard. The dashboard will include all survey data (such as triennial surveys or for-cause surveys) for all accreditation programs (excluding certification program data). Users can view aggregate historical accreditation data, new survey finding data, and comparison data to help identify patterns and trends to prioritize improvement initiatives.

The development of the *SAFER* Dashboard has been an incremental process rooted in extensive customer feedback and collaboration. Phase 1 implementation provided the dashboard to a subset of health care organizations, which allowed The Joint Commission to gain valuable insights for further expansion. This collaboration facilitated enhancements to deliver meaningful and useful data in a user-friendly format that is now available out to all Joint Commission-accredited organizations.

The launch included an enhancement made from the Phase 1 feedback, as the dashboard now will include Joint Commission national comparison data. This includes all surveys conducted by The Joint Commission in a designated time frame, based on organizations' accredited programs. Organizations will have the ability to access national aggregate *SAFER* Matrix comparison data, as well as view and compare the national Top 10 most frequently scored standards and elements of performance.

For Joint Commission-accredited organizations, questions about the *SAFER* Dashboard may be directed to the organization's designated account executive. Not Joint Commission accredited yet? Reach out to request a demo and learn more about how this can be a powerful tool to help your organization make efficient data-driven decisions every day.

[Learn more](#) about the capabilities of the *SAFER* Dashboard.

All PruittHealth skilled nursing centers to undergo Joint Commission accreditation

The Joint Commission and PruittHealth announced that each of PruittHealth's 91 skilled nursing centers in the Southeast will be required to undergo Joint Commission Nursing Care Center Accreditation to achieve the Gold Seal of Approval[®]. The Gold Seal is a symbol of quality that reflects a health care organization's commitment to providing safe and quality care.

As of March, 16 PruittHealth skilled nursing centers and 26 PruittHealth home health offices have achieved Joint Commission accreditation. PruittHealth decided to expand its Joint Commission accreditation to further demonstrate its commitment to an ongoing and concentrated focus on patient-centered, quality service delivery.

Joint Commission accreditation helps health care organizations identify known or unknown risks through a meaningful assessment of compliance with its accreditation standards. The standards focus on important processes and organizational functions that are essential to providing safe and quality patient care.

"For more than 50 years, my family has taken pride in elevating the level of care provided in communities we serve, and we're proud that our efforts will be backed by The Joint Commission with these accreditations," said Neil L. Pruitt Jr., chairman and CEO of PruittHealth. "We've gone to great lengths to ensure quality of care is ingrained in our culture, and every PruittHealth partner strives to provide safe, high-quality care that patients deserve and expect."

“Joint Commission accreditation will provide PruittHealth with an enhanced patient- and resident-centered quality framework to help identify and address vulnerabilities to safeguard patients and residents,” said Gina Zimmermann, Executive Director, Nursing Care Center and Assisted Living Community Services, The Joint Commission. “We look forward to expanding our collaboration with PruittHealth on its accreditation and quality improvement journey.”

PruittHealth plans to have its Georgia skilled nursing centers undergo accreditation in 2021, followed by its North Carolina and South Carolina skilled nursing centers. Several of these centers will also undergo achievement of Post-Acute Care and Memory Care Certifications from The Joint Commission.

Joint Commission NCC Accreditation can help with Georgia’s incentive awards

Joint Commission-accredited nursing homes in Georgia can earn the maximum 2% quality incentive adjustment under the recently approved Medicaid Quality Improvement Initiative Program.

The Joint Commission will be providing quarterly reports to relay which organizations meet the accreditation requirement to receive the incentive payment. The Joint Commission offers year-round access to its application, which allows organizations to apply on their own timeline for the ability to achieve the Gold Seal of Approval with just one survey – which may enable the organization to earn the maximum payout as quickly as possible.

By being accredited by The Joint Commission, nursing homes receive:

- Guidance from the industry’s most comprehensive foundation for the delivery of consistent, quality care and from experienced surveyors who proactively share best practices and evidence-based strategies.
- Dedicated customer support and educational resources.

[Learn more](#) or read the [George state plan amendment](#).

Resources

Check out recent Quality in Nursing Care Center and Assisted Living Communities blogs

- [Standards Manual for Assisted Living Accreditation Program Available Electronically](#): On July 1, The Joint Commission started accepting applications for the new Assisted Living Communities (ALC) Accreditation Program. Here is a new opportunity to review the standards by requesting a free, 90-day trial of E-dition®.
- [Vaccine Hesitation Among Senior Living and Home Care Workers](#): COVID-19 vaccination rates for workers in nursing homes lags that of health care workers in general. Record numbers of nursing home residents have been vaccinated, but it is still noted that 39% of workers surveyed do not plan to take the shot. While the rate of refusal decreases with every survey, every denied vaccination opportunity represents an increased risk to the fragile population in senior living and home care settings, writes Gina Zimmermann, Executive Director, Nursing Care Center and Assisted Living Community Services.

