

# Joint Commission Online

Dec. 2, 2020

## Quality and safety

### Coming soon: Revisions to select definitions in Sentinel Event Policy



Effective July 1, 2021, The Joint Commission will revise the definitions related to rape, assault, and homicide in its Sentinel Event Policy for all accreditation programs.

The Joint Commission's Office of Quality and Patient Safety (OQPS) worked with subject matter experts and analyzed reported events to identify areas of improvement.

The current definition combines the concepts related to sexual assault and physical assault — making it difficult to know when to apply the main definition or when to consider the footnote related to death, permanent harm, or severe temporary harm.

The revised definition differentiates among sexual abuse/assault, physical assault, and homicide. For each term, one definition is included for: patients/clients, residents, or individuals served; and one for staff members, licensed independent practitioners, visitors, or vendors. Additionally, the definitions have been revised to include all program settings.

The revised definitions are as follows:

- Sexual abuse/assault of any [patient/client] while receiving care, treatment, and services while on site at the organization/facility or while under the supervision/care of the organization.\*
- Sexual abuse/assault of a staff member, licensed independent practitioner, visitor, or vendor while on site at the organization/facility or while providing care/supervision to [patients/clients].\*
- Physical assault of any [patient/client] (leading to death, permanent harm, or severe temporary harm) while receiving care, treatment, and services while on site at the organization/facility or while under the supervision/care of the organization.
- Physical assault (leading to death, permanent harm, or severe temporary harm) of a staff member, licensed independent practitioner, visitor, or vendor while on site at the organization/facility or while providing care/supervision to [patients/clients].
- Homicide of any [patient/client] while receiving care, treatment, and services while on site at the organization/facility or while under the supervision/care of the organization.
- Homicide of a staff member, licensed independent practitioner, visitor, or vendor while on site at the organization/facility or while providing care/supervision to [patients/clients].

\*Sexual abuse/assault (including rape) as a sentinel event is defined as nonconsensual sexual contact, including oral, vaginal, or anal penetration or fondling of the individual's sex organ(s) by another individual.

One or more of the following must be present to determine that it is a sentinel event:

- Any staff-witnessed sexual contact as described above.
- Admission by the perpetrator that sexual contact, as described above, occurred on the premises.
- Sufficient clinical evidence obtained by the health care organization to support allegations of unconsented sexual contact.

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## Resources

### **Reminder: Please do not give gifts to Joint Commission surveyors or reviewers**

The holiday season is known as a time of giving. However, when it comes to extending that generosity to Joint Commission surveyors and reviewers, please be aware that The Joint Commission's gift policy prohibits the acceptance of any gifts related to accreditation.

The gift policy is designed to ensure the integrity of The Joint Commission's accreditation and certification decision process, as well as independence in business judgment. Gifts can include anything of value given to or by Joint Commission employees, including:

- Cash
- Gratuities
- Meals
- Gift certificates
- Tickets to sporting, cultural, or community events
- Invitations to performances or other events
- Favors (specially arranged for the recipient and not commonly offered to everyone)
- Discounts
- Free services
- Space
- Equipment
- Loans
- Education
- Lodging
- Transportation

The official policy regarding what can be accepted from health care organizations seeking accreditation with respect to gifts is as follows:

- Joint Commission employees involved with the accreditation and certification decision process (specifically, surveyors and reviewers) cannot accept any gift of value from a surveyed/reviewed or accredited/certified organization. A modest on-site meal is acceptable for efficiency purposes and is not considered a gift.
- Very few exceptions are allowable for accepting gifts. In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, it is in the best interest of organizations — as well as surveyors and reviewers — if no gifts are offered.
- Cash, cash equivalents, or entertainment cannot be accepted.

If an organization feels it necessary to provide something, then promotional mementos and souvenirs of nominal value — items of little value, such as a pen, coffee mug or T-shirt that have an organization's name or logo — are not considered gifts and can be accepted if given after the survey or review and when there is no apparent attempt to influence a business decision.

Gifts do not include emergency health care, security or safety provisions to protect staff while on site for consultation, survey or review. (Contact: Fran Carroll, [fc Carroll@jointcommission.org](mailto:fc Carroll@jointcommission.org))

### **AHE releases free COVID-19 resources aimed at environmental services professionals**

The Association for the Healthcare Environment (AHE) has released several COVID-19 resources for environmental services professionals. Some of the free resources found on the COVID-19 Resources for EVS Professionals 2020 webpage include:

- An [infographic](#) on COVID-19 environmental services considerations
- A [video](#) on the chain of infection

[View](#) the AHE resource page.

Learn more about [Joint Commission Resources'](#) offerings online or call 877-223-6866.

