CLARIFICATION: Joint Commission expectations during IQCP education and transition period

On January 1, 2014, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) began a two-year education and transition period for the Individualized Quality Control Plan (IQCP), a new quality control option for clinical laboratories. The IQCP Interpretive Guidelines outline a risk assessment model for establishing a quality control frequency that will replace the current Equivalent Quality Control (EQC). EQC must be phased out by January 1, 2016. The education and transition period provides an opportunity for laboratories to learn about and implement IQCP.

To address the CMS revisions, The Joint Commission changed the Quality System Assessment for Nonwaived Testing (QSA) chapter of the Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Laboratory and Point-of-Care Testing (CAMLAB). Note 2 was added to the Rationale for Standard QSA.02.04.01 to explain The Joint Commission’s expectations during the education and transition period, and was communicated in the March 2014 Joint Commission Perspectives. However, this note raised more questions. In order to minimize confusion, Note 2 has been removed. Following is an FAQ to answer additional questions:

FAQs on IQCP

Must my laboratory continue to perform quality control for any test system(s) being considered for an IQCP?

During CMS’ IQCP education and transition period, laboratories must continue to maintain compliance with existing Joint Commission requirements and Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) regulations related to quality control for all test systems.

What if my laboratory fails to perform quality control for any test system under consideration for an IQCP?

Failure to maintain compliance with Joint Commission requirements or existing CLIA regulations related to quality control will result in citation for quality control noncompliance.

Does the education and transition period apply to all quality control for all test systems?

The education and transition period applies only to test system(s) being investigated by the laboratory for inclusion in an IQCP.

For more information see the CMS IQCP website, visit the Joint Commission Connect extranet site, or contact your account executive at 630-792-3007.
CHS uses Joint Commission lab accreditation to systematize quality improvement

Community Health Systems, Franklin, Tenn., one of the largest hospital systems in the country, has laboratories in 206 affiliate hospitals. Their facilities range from small critical access facilities to large teaching and trauma centers throughout 29 states. Diane Blankenship, B.S., CLS (ASCP), director, Laboratory Services at CHS discusses the benefits of Joint Commission laboratory accreditation.

What are the benefits of using one accreditation for your hospitals and laboratories? The benefits are significant, standardization of best practices among our many affiliated facilities supports efficiency across the system. Using a single accrediting body allows us to speak the same language regarding standards and expectations. This reduces the need for development and tracking of multiple survey systems and reports, and allows us to standardize the method of responding to any deficiency.

Your organization has many Top Performer hospitals, how does Joint Commission lab accreditation help achieve quality goals? The Joint Commission provides a broad range of resources that we appreciate. The website and Laboratory Connect tools provide a wealth of information that is well presented and easy to use. Your account executives are also very responsive to our needs. Our laboratory directors are appreciative of the ability to seek information directly from your Standards interpretation Group when seeking to clarify specific requirements.

Why does your organization like the tracer methodology? The tracer methodology reinforces the team concept and the lab’s role in patient safety. Your surveyors take the survey outside the laboratory to show how lab results actually impact the patient.

Has the corporate survey option been beneficial? Yes. What we seek from The Joint Commission is a fair, consistent and comprehensive review of our affiliated laboratories to give us confidence they are doing everything necessary to provide quality results. Using a corporate survey team allows this group of surveyors to acquire a depth of knowledge of our systems and practices that would not happen otherwise. Clinical laboratories are one of the most highly regulated areas in health care, and we believe this survey process is the best way to ensure the labs are in continuous compliance.

Larson appointed interim executive director for Laboratory Accreditation program

Chad Larson, M.B.A., has been named interim executive director of the Laboratory Accreditation program. He replaces Jennifer Rhamy who left in December 2013. Larson, who has been at The Joint Commission for nine years, most recently served as service team manager in the division of Accreditation and Certification Operations. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Ill., and a master’s in Business Administration from Keller Graduate School of Management, Chicago, Ill. “I’m delighted to be a part of The Joint Commission’s lab team. We have a great group of people here and I enjoy working with the laboratory field,” says Larson. “It’s fascinating to me how we work to adjust to the ever-changing technological advancements of laboratory medicine through our standards and survey process. I think we offer a great product to the laboratory field.” Larson can be reached at clarson@jointcommission.org.
Medical Laboratory Professionals Week, April 20-26

Medical Laboratory Professionals Week is an annual celebration of the laboratory professionals and pathologists who play a vital role in every aspect of health care. The Joint Commission salutes the more than 300,000 medical laboratory professionals around the country who perform and interpret more than 10 billion laboratory tests in the U.S. every year. Joint Commission laboratory surveys are conducted by Joint Commission-employed medical technologists and pathologists. They must have clinical experience working in three or more technical specialty areas of laboratory medicine and at least five years of laboratory management experience.

Guest Access to Joint Commission Connect™ offers free information to customers

Now, anyone with an email address from a Joint Commission accredited health care organization can self-register for Guest Access on The Joint Commission Connect™ extranet. The organization’s security administrator no longer needs to approve access for those with an associated email address. To start, go to the Guest Access site and request access. As a guest, you will have access to:

- Leading Practice Library: Real life solutions successfully implemented by health care organizations and reviewed by Joint Commission standards experts.
- Standards BoosterPaks™: Searchable documents that provide detailed information about a single standard or topic area that has been associated with a high volume of inquiries or non-compliance scores.

Note: Guest Access does not include entry to any organization-specific data or reports.

Events

Olea to present Tracer Methodology session at CLMA KnowledgeLab 2014

Joint Commission Laboratory Field Director Stacy Olea, M.B.A., M.T. (ASCP), FACHE, will present a pre-conference session on the Tracer Methodology at the Clinical Laboratory Management Association’s (CLMA) KnowledgeLab 2014 on May 4 from 1-5 p.m. at the Rio All Suites Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. This interactive session will begin with an overview of tracer methodology and end with how to complete mock tracers in your own laboratory. Laboratories can use this information to prepare for a Joint Commission survey or to perform a mock internal audit. For more information and to register, visit the CLMA website.

Resources

New on the web

- Information for pathologists: The Joint Commission offers a web page with resources for designed specifically for pathologists. Check out these resources:
  - Why pathologists should consider Joint Commission Lab Accreditation
  - Laboratory standards sampler
  - Meet out pathologist surveyors
  - The Connection to Quality - Laboratory Accreditation

- From Joint Commission Resources (JCR): Order by visiting the JCR Store or calling 877-223-6866: