The Joint Commission approved standards and elements of performance (EPs) specifically created for primary care medical home (PCMH) clinics and providers in ambulatory settings that are part of accredited hospitals and critical access hospitals. Similar to the PCMH certification option for accredited non-hospital ambulatory care organizations launched in July 2011 (see July 2011 Perspectives, pages 1 and 10–11), this optional hospital PCMH certification is based on the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s definition of a medical home and comprises the following five operational characteristics:

1. Patient-centered care
2. Comprehensive care
3. Coordinated care
4. Superb access to care
5. System-based approach to quality and safety

Available in early 2013, the hospital PCMH certification is consistent with new federal health care reform efforts to improve health outcomes and the continuity, quality, and efficiency of health care services. Patients benefit from this model of care because they have increased access to their primary care clinician and interdisciplinary team; they are actively involved in setting their treatment and self-management goals; their care is tracked and coordinated; and services are supported by increased use of health information technology.

Organizations interested in pursuing the PCMH certification option must comply with both the existing Joint Commission hospital or critical access hospital requirements and additional PCMH-specific requirements. An evaluation of the PCMH-specific requirements will be incorporated into either the hospital on-site triennial accreditation survey or a special PCMH extension survey. Similar to accreditation, the PCMH certification option covers a three-year period, and the certification is displayed on the Joint Commission’s Quality Check® website. Hospitals and critical access hospitals will be able to request this optional certification through their electronic Application for Accreditation (E-App) in early 2013.

The Joint Commission’s Prepublication Standards webpage displays the new standards and EPs at http://www.jointcommission.org/standards_information/prepublication_standards.aspx. For more information about the hospital PCMH optional certification program, please contact qualityhospitals@jointcommission.org.