

# REMINDER: SAFER™ Matrix Effective January 1, 2017

## *New Scoring Methodology for All Programs*

As previously announced in *Perspectives*,<sup>1,2</sup> The Joint Commission’s multiphase Project REFRESH includes the launch of the new Survey Analysis for Evaluating Risk™ (SAFER™) matrix, **effective January 1, 2017, for all accreditation and certification programs.**

The SAFER matrix (*see* figure on page 3) replaces the current scoring methodology, which is based on predetermined categorizations (Category A or Category C; direct or indirect impact) of elements of performance (EPs), allowing surveyors and reviewers to perform real-time, on-site evaluations of deficiencies. To coincide with the roll-out of the SAFER approach, the Measure of Success (MOS) requirement is also being eliminated; therefore, all MOS submissions due on or after January 1, 2017, are no longer required as the tool will be closed out. However, organizations are encouraged to continue to monitor the effectiveness of their corrective actions through future measurement as they find value in doing so.

## Operational Definitions

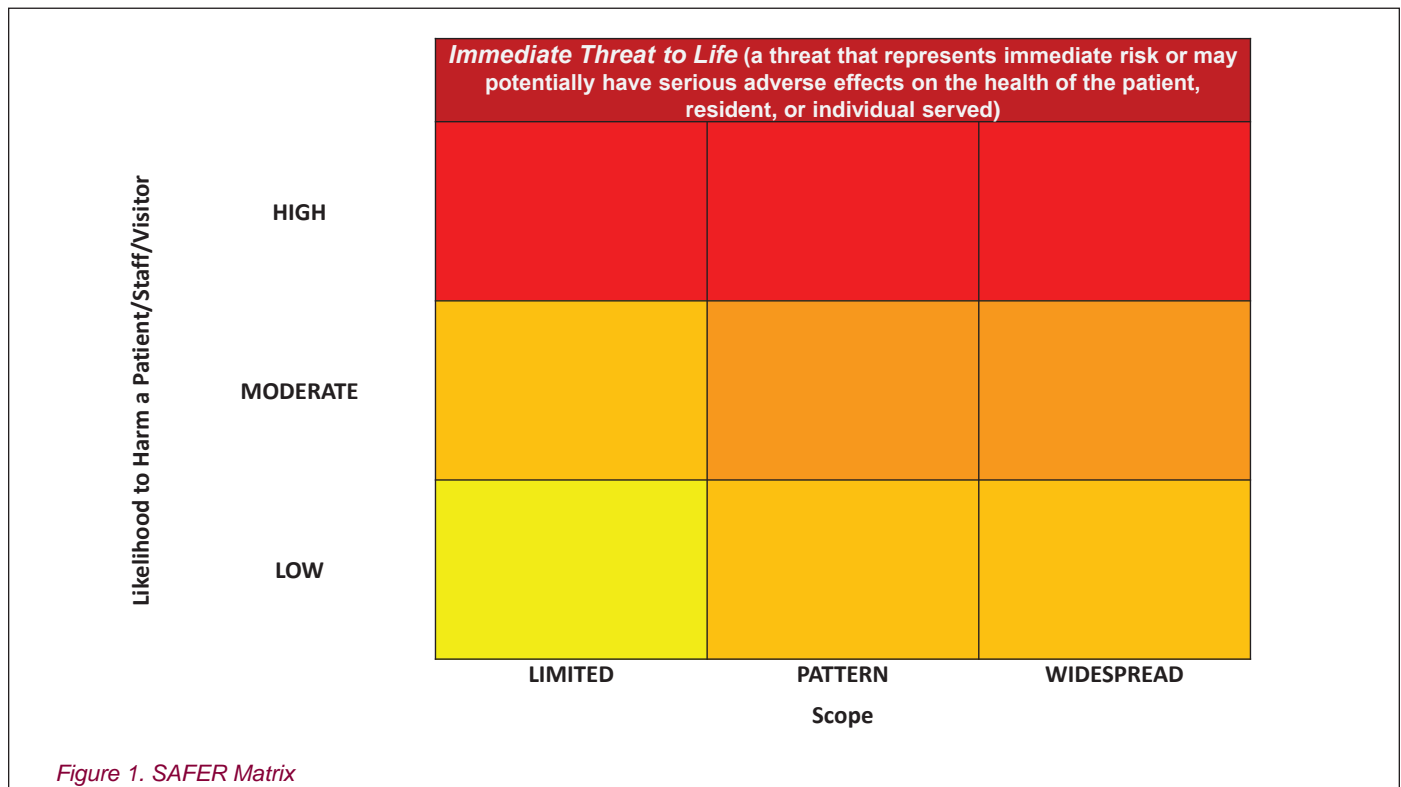
The SAFER matrix represents a shift from the historical approach of “counting” observations to an evaluative approach of assessing the scope of patients impacted (or potentially impacted) by an issue of noncompliance. As they use the SAFER matrix, surveyors and reviewers will place each Requirement for Improvement (RFI) within the matrix according to the likelihood of the issue to cause harm to patients, staff, or visitors and according to the scope of a cited deficiency. Implementing this approach includes incorporating the operational definitions shown along the *x* and *y*

axes of the SAFER matrix.

Operational definitions along the *y* axis—“Likelihood to Harm”—are as follows:

- **High**—Occurrence of harm is likely; that is, the finding could directly lead to harm without the need for other significant circumstances or failures.
- **Moderate**—Occurrence of harm is possible; that is, the finding could cause harm directly but is more likely





to cause harm as a contributing factor in the presence of special circumstances or additional failures.

- **Low**—Occurrence of harm is rare; that is, the finding undermines safety/quality or contributes to an unsafe environment is but very unlikely to directly contribute to harm.

Operational definitions along the x axis—“Scope”—are as follows:

- **Widespread**—Issue is described as “pervasive at the organization”; that is, the finding is the result of a process or systemic failure and could impact a majority of patients.
- **Pattern**—Issue is described as having the potential to “impact more than a limited number of patients impacted”; that is, the finding involves process variation.
- **Limited**—Issue is described as a “unique occurrence”; that is, the finding is considered an outlier and not representative of routine or regular practice.


These operational definitions are designed to be applied at the organization level. As a reminder, the SAFER matrix is meant to be utilized as a tool in the survey process to illustrate potential risk areas at the organization. It will not be used in isolation to drive or determine the application of certain decision rules.

### Resources on the Extranet

The Joint Commission provides several resources on organizations’ secure *Joint Commission Connect*™ extranet site to assist

with the transition to the SAFER approach. The SAFER link under the Survey Process tab (at “Post-Survey”) includes these resources:

- PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes
- Matrix template to practice placing findings on the grid
- FAQs
- One-page infographic
- May and October 2016 *Perspectives* articles<sup>1,2</sup>
- Sample report that incorporates the SAFER approach
- Quick tips and FAQs for submitting Evidence of Standards Compliance (ESC)
- Webinar recording
- Podcast
- Quiz that includes where to place example findings on the matrix and the rationale as to why

For additional information, please contact your organization’s assigned Account Executive or review the abovementioned resource documents located on the extranet site under the Survey Process tab. Questions may be submitted to [saferr@jointcommission.org](mailto:saferr@jointcommission.org). 

### References

1. The Joint Commission. The SAFER matrix: A new scoring methodology. *Jt Comm Perspect.* 2016 May;36(5):1, 3.
2. The Joint Commission. The SAFER™ matrix and changes to the post-survey process. *Jt Comm Perspect.* 2016 Oct;36(10):1, 3, 4.