

Joint Commission Advocacy Actions to Aid Health Care Organizations in Response to COVID-19

Supporting Efforts to Meet the Health Care Workforce’s Need for Medical Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment

The Joint Commission strongly supports emergency efforts at the federal level to dramatically increase the production and distribution of personal protective equipment and other necessary medical equipment and supplies. The Joint Commission advocates for the [removal of any remaining impediments](#) to providing vital personal protective equipment and medical supplies to health care personnel.

Clarifying Use of Face Masks Brought from Home by Health Care Professionals

The Joint Commission [supports allowing staff to bring their own face masks](#) or respirators to wear at work when their health care organizations cannot provide them with adequate protection commensurate with the risk of infection to which they are exposed by the nature of their work. The Joint Commission supports efforts to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE) and to distribute scarce supplies according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. Homemade masks are an extreme measure and should only be used when standard PPE of proven protective value is unavailable.

Urging Congress to Provide Health Care Organizations the Funding They Need to Respond to a Pandemic

Health care organizations play a critical role in the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Joint Commission [has urged Congress](#) to provide the emergency funding necessary to allow health care providers to continue providing patient care.

Communicating with Federal Partners

The Joint Commission is part of a number of ongoing calls about the COVID-19 outbreak and national response that involve federal agencies. The Joint Commission has a standing daily call with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the other accrediting bodies. These calls are designed to raise issues that are being experienced by accredited organizations in order to get CMS resolution and to learn of CMS actions that would affect our customers. The Joint Commission is also a member of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Stakeholder Group and the Healthcare and Public Health Care Sector Coordinating Council. Additionally, The Joint Commission reviews rapidly changing federal guidelines and reaches out to federal partners on specific questions to the evolving guidelines.

Urging CMS to Issue Waivers for Health Care Providers

The Joint Commission urged CMS to issue [blanket waivers](#) for certain Medicare Conditions of Participation. Such waivers provide health care providers with regulatory flexibility during the COVID-19 outbreak without waiting for approval on a state-by-state basis.

Advocating for Addressing Barriers to Telehealth During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

The Joint Commission and health care stakeholders [sent a letter to congressional leaders](#) urging Congress to address barriers preventing health care providers from fully leveraging and scaling critical telehealth services needed to combat COVID-19.

Improving Patient Safety and Coordinated Care for Substance Use Disorder Patients

As a member of the Partnership to Amend 42 CFR Part 2, The Joint Commission has long advocated for aligning federal patient consent requirements for purposes of treatment, payment, and operations. The Joint Commission [applauded the passage of legislation](#) in the CARES Act to align 42 CFR Part 2 (regulations that govern the privacy of substance use disorder records) with HIPAA with initial patient consent. This legislation will help to reduce unintended treatment errors and to ensure that substance use disorder patients receive safe, coordinated care during the COVID-19 outbreak and into the future.