

Facts about The Joint Commission

Mission: To continuously improve the safety and quality of care provided to the public through the provision of health care accreditation and related services that support performance improvement in health care organizations.

Positioning statement: Helping Health Care Organizations Help Patients.

The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits nearly 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Since 1951, The Joint Commission has maintained state-of-the-art standards that focus on improving the quality and safety of care provided by health care organizations. The Joint Commission's comprehensive accreditation process evaluates an organization's compliance with these standards and other accreditation requirements. Joint Commission accreditation is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards. To earn and maintain The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval™, an organization must undergo an on-site survey by a Joint Commission survey team at least every three years. (Laboratories must be surveyed every two years.)

The Joint Commission is governed by a 29-member Board of Commissioners that includes physicians, administrators, nurses, employers, a labor representative, health plan leaders, quality experts, ethicists, a consumer advocate and educators. The Board of Commissioners brings to The Joint Commission diverse experience in health care, business and public policy. The Joint Commission's corporate members are the American College of Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, the American Dental Association, the American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association. The Joint Commission employs approximately 1,000 people in its surveyor force, at its central office in Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois, and at a satellite office in Washington, D.C. The Washington office is The Joint Commission's primary interface with government agencies and with Congress, seeking and maintaining partnerships with the government that will improve the quality of health care for all Americans, and working with Congress on legislation involving the quality and safety of health care.

Accreditation and certification services

The Joint Commission provides evaluation and accreditation services for the following types of organizations:

- General, psychiatric, children's and rehabilitation hospitals
- Critical access hospitals
- Medical equipment services, hospice services and other home care organizations
- Nursing homes and other long term care facilities
- Behavioral health care organizations, addiction services
- Rehabilitation centers, group practices, office-based surgeries and other ambulatory care providers
- Independent or freestanding laboratories

The Joint Commission also awards Disease Specific Care Certification to health plans, disease management service companies, hospitals and other care delivery settings that provide disease management and chronic care services. The Joint Commission also has a Health Care Staffing

Services Certification Program and is developing a certification program for transplant centers and health care services.

Benefits of Joint Commission accreditation and certification

- Strengthens community confidence in the quality and safety of care, treatment and services
- Provides a competitive edge in the marketplace
- Improves risk management and risk reduction
- Provides education on good practices to improve business operations
- Provides professional advice and counsel, enhancing staff education
- Enhances staff recruitment and development
- Recognized by select insurers and other third parties
- May fulfill regulatory requirements in select states

For more information, see the fact sheets on “Benefits of Joint Commission Accreditation” and “Benefits of Joint Commission Certification.”

Standards and performance measurement

Joint Commission standards address the organization’s level of performance in key functional areas, such as patient rights, patient treatment, and infection control. The standards focus not simply on an organization’s ability to provide safe, high quality care, but on its actual performance as well. Standards set forth performance expectations for activities that affect the safety and quality of patient care. If an organization does the right things and does them well, there is a strong likelihood that its patients will experience good outcomes. The Joint Commission develops its standards in consultation with health care experts, providers, measurement experts, purchasers, and consumers.

Introduced in February 1997, The Joint Commission’s ORYX® initiative integrates outcomes and other performance measurement data into the accreditation process. ORYX measurement requirements are intended to support Joint Commission accredited organizations in their quality improvement efforts. Performance measures are essential to the credibility of any modern evaluation activity for health care organizations. They supplement and help guide the standards-based survey process by providing a more targeted basis for the regular accreditation survey, for continuously monitoring actual performance, and for guiding and stimulating continuous improvement in health care organizations. Some accredited organizations are required to submit performance measurement data on a specified minimum number of measure sets or non-core measures, as appropriate, to The Joint Commission through a Joint Commission listed performance measurement system. For more information, see “Facts about ORYX.”

Education and information

Joint Commission Resources is a global, knowledge-based organization that provides innovative solutions designed to help health care organizations improve patient safety and quality. An affiliate of The Joint Commission, JCR is the official publisher and educator of The Joint Commission. JCR provides expertise on the many issues organizations face in a challenging health care environment and offers: education programs, publications and multimedia products, its Continuous Service Readiness initiative, comprehensive health care consulting and custom education, and accreditation and international consulting for organizations abroad. The Joint

Commission and JCR maintain strict policies that prohibit The Joint Commission from sharing any confidential information about accredited organizations with JCR. The fact that an organization has obtained services from JCR is kept completely separate from Joint Commission accreditation decisions.

The Joint Commission provides a comprehensive guide to help individuals learn more about the safety and quality of Joint Commission accredited health care organizations and programs throughout the United States. Quality Check®, located at www.qualitycheck.org, includes each accredited organization's most recent Quality Report. This report provides: detailed information about an organization's performance and how it compares to similar organizations; the organization's accreditation decision and the effective dates of the accreditation award; programs accredited by The Joint Commission, and programs or services accredited by other accrediting bodies; compliance with The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals; special quality awards; and, for hospitals, performance on National Quality Improvement Goals. For more information, see "Facts about Quality Check® and Quality Reports."