

Common Questions and Answers

Joint Commission International Accreditation

Standards for Ambulatory Care

What Is Accreditation, and What Are the Benefits?

Accreditation is a process in which an entity, separate and distinct from the health care organization, usually nongovernmental, assesses the health care organization to determine if it meets a set of requirements designed to improve quality of care. Accreditation is usually voluntary. Accreditation standards are usually regarded as optimal and achievable. Accreditation provides a visible commitment by an organization to improve the quality of patient care, ensure a safe environment, and continually work to reduce risks to patients and staff. Accreditation has gained worldwide attention as an effective quality evaluation and management tool.

What Is JCI Accreditation, and What Is JCI's Relationship to the Joint Commission?

JCI is a division of the Joint Commission; it is a subsidiary corporation. JCI's mission is to improve the quality of health care in the international community by providing worldwide accreditation services.

For more than 75 years, the Joint Commission and its predecessor organization have been dedicated to improving the quality and safety of health care services. Today, as the largest accreditor of health care organizations in the United States, it surveys more than 15,000 health care programs through a voluntary accreditation process. The Joint Commission and its subsidiary, JCI, are both not-for-profit U.S. corporations.

What Are the Purpose and the Goal of the New JCI Initiative?

JCI accreditation is designed to respond to a growing demand around the world for standards-based evaluation in health care. The purpose of this initiative is to offer the international community a standards-based, objective process for evaluating health care organizations. The goal of the program is to stimulate demonstration of continuous, sustained improvement in health care organizations by applying international consensus standards and indicators. Accreditation services are based on an international framework of standards adaptable to local needs.

The following is a brief overview of the JCI program:

- International consensus standards are the basis of the accreditation program
- The underlying philosophy of the standards is based on principles of quality management and continuous quality improvement
- Standards identified as “core” must be met by each organization that seeks to be accredited. These standards are printed in bold typeface in each chapter.
- The accreditation process is designed to accommodate the legal, religious, and/or cultural factors within a country. Although there will be uniform high standards for patient care and safety, country-specific considerations for these factors will be part of the accreditation process.
- The on-site survey team and agenda will vary depending on the organization's size and type of services provided. For example, a large ambulatory care organization may require a four-day survey by a physician, a nurse, and an administrator, and a smaller organization may require a two- or three-day survey.
- Joint Commission International accreditation is designed to be valid, reliable, and objective. Based on the analysis of the survey findings, final accreditation decisions will be made by an international accreditation committee.



How Were the Standards Initially Developed and Refined for This Edition?

A 16-member international task force composed of experienced physicians, nurses, administrators, and public policy experts guided the development of the international accreditation standards. The task force consisted of members from six major world regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific Rim, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Africa.

An international standards committee continues the work of the task force and makes recommendations about updates and modifications necessary for these standards to reflect contemporary practice continuously.

How Are the Standards Organized?

The standards are organized around the important functions common to all health care organizations. The JCI international task force selected a functional organization of the standards as ideal for international users. The selection was based on experiences during the previous five years in using this approach in more than 30 countries. The applicability of this approach has been validated in accreditation surveys around the world.

The standards are grouped by those functions related to providing patient care and those related to providing a safe, effective, and well-managed organization. These functions apply to the entire organization as well as to each department, unit, or service within the organization. The survey process gathers standards compliance information at this level, but the accreditation decision is based on the overall level of compliance found throughout the entire organization.

Why Are Some Standards in Bold Typeface?

Standards in bold typeface must be met at a satisfactory level by all JCI-accredited organizations. These standards are considered “core” because they protect fundamental patient and family rights, support a safe patient care facility, and reduce risk in the patient care process.

Are the Standards Available for the International Community to Use?

Yes. These standards are available in the international public domain for use by individual health care organizations and by public agencies in improving the quality of patient care.


When There Are National or Local Laws Related to a Standard, What Applies?

When standard compliance is related to a law or regulation, whichever sets the higher or stricter requirement applies.

How Do I Use This Standards Manual?

This international standards manual can be used to do the following:

- Guide the efficient and effective management of a health care organization
- Guide the organization and delivery of patient care services, as well as efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of those services
- Review the important functions of a health care organization
- Become aware of those standards that all organizations must meet to be JCI accredited
- Review the compliance expectations of standards and the additional requirements found in associated intent statements
- Become aware of the relationship of the JCI standards for ambulatory care to Joint Commission U.S. standards, as well as other quality evaluation and award program standards and criteria

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- Become aware of the accreditation policies and procedures and the accreditation process
 - **Become familiar with the terminology used in the manual**

What Are the “Measurable Elements” of a Standard?

The measurable elements of a standard are those requirements of the standard and its intent statement that will be reviewed and assigned a score during the accreditation survey process. The measurable elements simply list what is required to be in full compliance with the standard. Each element is already reflected in the standard or intent statement. Listing the measurable elements is intended to provide greater clarity to the standards and help organizations educate staff about the standards and prepare for the accreditation survey.

How Frequently Will the Standards Be Updated?

Information and experience related to the standards will be gathered on an ongoing basis. If a standard no longer reflects contemporary health care practice, commonly available technology, quality management practices, and so forth, it will be revised or deleted. It is currently anticipated that the standards will be revised and published approximately every three years.