

Joint Commission International Survey Process During COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, JCI has made some adjustments in the survey process for organizations that have been directly impacted by COVID-19. The real or potential impact of COVID-19 falls on a continuum, as some hospitals have been significantly impacted by the virus, while others have had little to no impact. To help determine where a hospital falls on the impact continuum, JCI developed a COVID-19 Impact Assessment in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. The Team Leader sends the COVID-19 Impact Assessment to the Survey Coordinator with a request to complete and return the COVID-19 Impact Assessment at least two (2) weeks prior to the start of the scheduled survey. The completed Impact Assessment identifies where hospitals are on the continuum. Based on the Impact Assessment completed by the hospital, the impact of COVID-19 is identified as: none, low, moderate, or high.

Adjustments to the survey process and expectations for compliance with some standards may be altered for organizations that have experienced a moderate to high impact from COVID-19. For example, during the impact of COVID-19, it is important for hospitals to be very focused on compliance with standards relating to the global communicable disease plan, first points of hospital contact, early recognition and follow-up actions, personal protective equipment (PPE) and safe reuse of PPE, negative pressure rooms, and staff competence in infection control practices. However, less emphasis may be placed on the annual infection control risk assessment. Another chapter with areas for more intense focus and potential allowances is the SQE (Staff Qualifications and Education) chapter. During the effects of the pandemic, more emphasis will be placed on how temporary privileges are granted, cross training of staff, staff health and safety – particularly immunizations – and second victim services. Less emphasis may be placed on annual staff training, annual staff evaluations, physician OPPE (Ongoing Professional Practice Evaluation), physician credentialing and PSV (Primary Source Verification) for temporary physicians and clinical staff, and staff assignments beyond their job description (but still within the scope of practice).

Several questions have been raised regarding standards within the FMS (Facility Management and Safety) chapter. A JCI client recently asked:

Question: Are we still required to complete the necessary fire drills and other types of tests without raising the anxiety levels of staff due to COVID?

Answer: Staff knowledge and competency related to fire and disaster management is important to ensuring patient safety, however, as long as there is evidence to support that staff have demonstrated competence in these areas in the past, conducting the annual drills may be postponed. It would be important for the organization to develop a plan for how and when they may be conducted in the future.

Other areas in facility management that may be less essential during the effects of the pandemic include; annual review of FMS plans, preventive maintenance, and hazardous materials recordkeeping. Making allowances during the survey for standards that may be less essential during the pandemic does not release an organization from their obligation to comply with the JCI standards. Therefore, the expectation is that the organization develops a plan for ensuring compliance with all standards in the future.

The following questions recently submitted relate to the COVID-19 Impact Assessment:

Question: After we receive the Impact Assessment for our next survey, are we expected to continuously update the impact assessment even after the survey?

Answer: The current intention of the Impact Assessment is for use in conjunction with a scheduled survey to help the survey team determine what, if any, allowances would be made to the upcoming accreditation survey. At this time, once the survey has been successfully completed, there is no expectation for organizations to update the COVID-19 Impact Assessment.



Question: Our survey is not scheduled until the end of 2021; however, is it possible for our organization to participate in the validation of the COVID-19 Impact Assessment now?

Answer: The COVID-19 Impact Assessment is designed to help the survey team understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on the organization in order to determine what, if any, allowances would be made to the upcoming accreditation survey. Validation of the Impact Assessment is performed during the onsite survey in a special leadership session held on the first day of the survey. The current intention of the Impact Assessment is for use in conjunction with a scheduled survey. In the future, if JCI decides to expand the use of the Impact Assessment for other purposes, JCI may ask for participation by other organizations not immediately scheduled for survey.

We welcome questions related to clarification or interpretations of standards and the survey process. Please submit your inquiry via the following link:

<https://www.jointcommissioninternational.org/standards/submit-a-jci-standards-interpretation-question/>