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For Your Health’s Sake

Preparing For The Joint Commission

(Huntsville, TX) – Healthcare industry employees—in hospitals, nursing homes, office-based surgery practices, home care providers, and laboratories—are overwhelmed on a daily basis with the importance of keeping up with and learning new processes and procedures that save lives. There are only so many hours in a day. So, why squeeze another thing into an already busy day? Why become an accredited facility through The Joint Commission? For Huntsville Memorial Hospital, the answer is simple. Accreditation from The Joint Commission sets a standard of care for our employees and patients. We choose to complete this process because it’s what’s best for our patient and this community.

The Joint Commission is not the only accreditation agency in the Healthcare industry, but it is by far the largest and most prestigious. Receiving Joint Commission accreditation gives hospitals and other healthcare providers a leg up in the process of providing their consumers the highest level of service.

Preparing for a Joint Commission survey can be a challenging process for any healthcare provider. At a minimum, a hospital must be completely familiar with the current standards, examine current processes, policies and procedures relative to the standards and prepare to improve any areas that are not currently in compliance.

To obtain accreditation, healthcare organization staff members must be able to demonstrate proficiency across specific job competencies and receive performance evaluations based on specific job descriptions. The hospital must be in compliance with the standards for at least four months prior to the initial survey.

Top reasons for seeking Joint Commission accreditation are:

- Provides a competitive edge in the marketplace.
- Educates staff regarding best practices and improves business operations, reducing risks.
- Provides professional advice and boosts the quality of staff recruitment and development.
- Improves quality, safety and overall healthcare experience for patients, families and staff.
- Recognized by insurers and third parties and may fulfill regulatory requirements in select states.
From this list, you begin to gain insight into a few key benefits of Joint Commission accreditation. Administratively, it increases our ability to recruit and retain high-performing clinical and administrative staff that will provide patients the quality care they expect and deserve. Additionally, it is a valuable marketing tool for attracting consumers who seek only “accredited” providers for their healthcare needs, thus keeping healthcare organizations in business.

The objective of the Joint Commission’s survey is not only to evaluate the hospital, but also to provide education and guidance that will help staff continue to improve the hospital's performance. Prospective patients who are looking for the highest-quality care possible will find research supporting the assumption that Joint Commission accredited hospitals have a marked improvement in quality of care when compared to non-accredited hospitals.

Additionally, a majority of state governments recognize Joint Commission accreditation as a condition of licensure and receiving Medicaid or Medicare reimbursement. Some general and professional liability insurance companies strongly encourage external accreditations. Prior to billing Medicare or Medicaid, they will ask for accreditation results (CMS—Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) Conditions of Participation and / or a certificate of compliance.

The survey process evaluates actual care processes by tracing patients through their care cycle, analyzing key operational systems that directly impact the quality and safety of patient care. All healthcare organizations, other than laboratories, are subject to a three-year accreditation cycle. The Joint Commission will provide the organization's accreditation decision, the date that accreditation was awarded, and any standards that were cited for improvement. Organizations deemed to be in compliance with all or most of the applicable standards are awarded the decision of Accreditation.

Sally Nelson
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