



nt Commission

# Behavioral Health Care Accreditation





The Joint Commission and its Gold Seal of Approval® are a widely recognized benchmark representing the most comprehensive evaluation process in behavioral and physical health care. The Joint Commission's role in behavioral health care and human services is well established and nationally renowned. Joint Commission accreditation benefits your organization by:

#### **Giving you a competitive advantage**

Achieving Joint Commission accreditation is a statement to the community and the people you serve that your organization is committed to providing care, treatment, or services of the highest quality. It helps set you apart from other behavioral health organizations and provides a mark of distinction.

#### **Assisting recognition from insurers, associations, and other third parties**

Many payors, regulatory agencies, and managed care contractors require Joint Commission accreditation for reimbursement, certification or licensure, and as a key element of their participation agreements. Others recognize Joint Commission accreditation in lieu of their own surveys, reducing duplicate events.

#### **Improving liability insurance coverage**


By enhancing risk management efforts, accreditation may improve access to, or reduce the cost of liability insurance coverage. Find a list of liability insurers that recognize Joint Commission accreditation at [www.jointcommission.org/BHCins/](http://www.jointcommission.org/BHCins/)

#### **Helping organize and strengthen your improvement efforts**

Accreditation encompasses state-of-the-art performance improvement concepts that help you provide and continuously improve your process of care, treatment or services.

#### **Enhancing staff education**

The accreditation process is designed to be educational. Joint Commission surveyors offer suggestions for approaches and strategies that may help your organization better meet the accreditation requirements and provide state-of-the-art operations.



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Below is an example of some of the programs and settings accredited under The Joint Commission's Behavioral Health Care accreditation program.

- Addictions services/programs
- Behavioral health homes
- Community mental health centers
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## Eligibility for Accreditation

Any behavioral health care organization may apply for Joint Commission accreditation under the standards in the *Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Behavioral Health Care (CAMBHC)* if the following requirements are met:

- For organizations providing foster care, the organization has a minimum of three foster homes with two homes caring for at least one individual.
- For organizations providing methadone detoxification, at least three individuals have been treated.
- For all other organizations, three individuals, with at least two active at the time of the initial on-site survey, have been provided care, treatment or services.



630-792-5771.

## Applying For Accreditation

### Application

This electronic document provides us with essential information about your organization, including ownership, demographics, and types and volume of services/programs provided, which helps us plan your survey. Your Joint Commission application for accreditation is housed on a secure organization-specific extranet site called Joint Commission Connect® that is found at [www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org).

### Requesting an Application

To request an application:

- Phone: 630-792-5771 or email: [BHC@jointcommission.org](mailto:BHC@jointcommission.org)

### Accessing and Submitting the Application

After your request is processed, you will receive an email providing log-in information to access the application. (See next page). When completing the application for accreditation, you should identify all of the services/programs that you provide and the location of each site. It is important that all these are listed so The Joint Commission can determine which accreditation requirements apply to your organization and assign appropriate surveyor(s) for an appropriate number of days.

Once complete, submit the application with a \$1,700 deposit, which is applied toward your cost of accreditation. Submitting the application without the deposit will delay the scheduling of your on-site survey.



## Your On-site Survey

The Joint Commission's accreditation process helps organizations improve the safety and quality of care, treatment or services. The process begins with an on-site survey that assesses compliance with Joint Commission accreditation requirements. Typically, on-site surveys are conducted by one surveyor for two to four days, and involve the following:

- 'Tracing' the individual served's experience – looking at programs and services provided by various staff and departments within the organization, as well as 'hand-offs' between them
- On-site observations and interviews with staff, individuals served, and families (where appropriate)
- Review of documents provided by the organization
- Assessment of the safety of the physical facility, if applicable

## Scheduling your First Survey

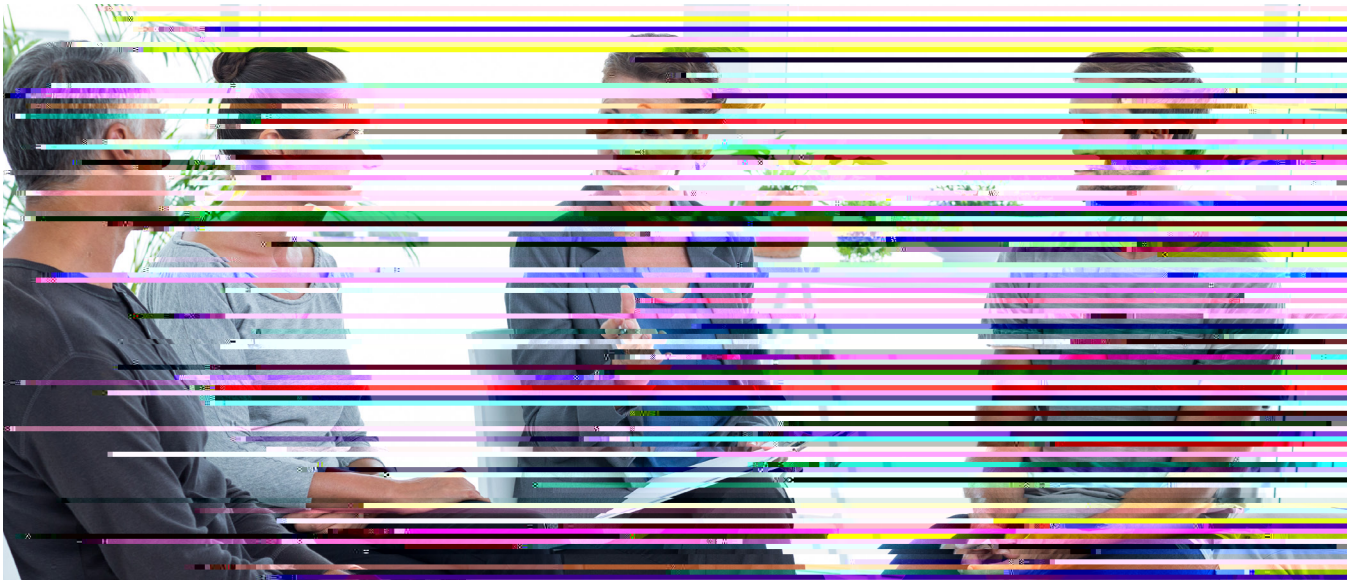
Your first Joint Commission accreditation survey needs to be scheduled within twelve months from the time we receive your application for accreditation. In the application, you'll indicate the date you will be ready for your initial on-site survey. The Joint Commission will then schedule the survey as soon thereafter as possible.

You can also indicate 15 dates that you would not like the survey to be conducted. Your account executive will work with you to schedule your survey, and you will have at least 30 days notice of the exact date that the surveyor(s) will be there.

Please note that the accreditation award will always be for a three-year term.

## Early Survey Option

The Early Survey Policy allows an organization new to Joint Commission accreditation to enter the accreditation process in two stages. Available for new organizations and for those already established, the Early Survey Option is different than a normal, full survey in that this option consists of two on-site visits. For an organization not yet providing care, treatment or services, this option makes it possible to set up the business operations on a four-



## Your Surveyors: Behavioral Health Care Professionals

Joint Commission Behavioral Health Care field surveyors are behavioral health care professionals who understand the day-to-day issues that confront you and have the hands-on expertise to help you resolve them. The Behavioral Health Care surveyor cadre is composed of psychologists, social workers, behavioral health care nurses, and administrators with experience in behavioral health care. Each surveyor conducts approximately 12-15 site visits per year. This extensive experience helps them collect and share good practices across organizations.

The Joint Commission ensures surveyor consistency by providing several weeks of initial training and supervision followed by yearly continuing education to keep surveyors up-to-date on advances in quality-related performance evaluation. A rigorous training process and certification examination must be successfully completed before becoming a Joint Commission behavioral health surveyor. This ongoing training and supervision helps ensure that your on-site survey is an educational process, not just a compliance exercise.

The Joint Commission evaluates its surveyors' performance continually throughout the year. Many Joint Commission surveyors are also currently practicing in the behavioral health care field and thus appreciate your organization's mission as well as understand your perspective of the accreditation experience.

### Tracer Methodology

The Tracer Method is a key component of every on-site survey. It uses the individual's care, treatment or service experience as the basis from which to assess compliance with applicable accreditation requirements. The surveyor(s) will follow the individual's experience with care, treatment or services throughout the organization. Tracers allow the surveyor(s) to identify performance issues in one or more of the steps of the care, treatment or service process.

### SAFER® Matrix

Your post-survey findings will be plotted on our proprietary SAFER matrix, which allows you to easily identify their risk level and how systemic the issues were found to be across your organization.

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**“I am always impressed by the experience, patience, and thoroughness of our surveyors. With The Joint Commission as a partner, I feel like we have a wise mentor prodding us to do better, to think more clearly, and to be more efficient.”**

***Joint Commission Customer***

## **Accreditation Requirements**

The Joint Commission's *Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Behavioral Health Care (CAMBHC)* is the place to begin when preparing for accreditation. This manual is an excellent tool to help your group become organized and established. Available online, the manual has a filtering tool so you can easily determine which accreditation requirements apply to your



## **Accessing the Accreditation Requirements**

Joint Commission standards for behavioral health care settings are available in both print and electronic format and can be accessed through a variety of means.

### **Attributes**

- Web-based accreditation manual accessed electronically
- Filters applicable standards by selection of setting (e.g., mental health facility, foster care, substance use, etc.)

### **How to Access**

- Request a 90-day trial at:  
<http://pages.jointcommission.org/BHCE.html>
- One free license sent upon receipt of application and deposit

### **Attributes**

- Standards for all Behavioral Health Care settings/  
programs/populations

## Preparation Timeline: Organizations Requesting a First Survey

<p>☒ ☒ ☒</p>	<p>Email message sent with access to the electronic application for accreditation.</p>	<p>Staff member(s) with knowledge of your organization's services/programs, sites, and volume should complete and return the application for accreditation with a \$1,700 non-refundable/non-transferable deposit for initial survey.</p>
<p>☒ ☒ ☒☒ ☒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– You are assigned an Account Executive.</li> <li>– You will receive a complimentary copy of E-dition, our online accreditation manual.</li> <li>– You are given access to a complimentary 6-month online subscription to <i>Perspectives</i>, the official newsletter of The Joint Commission.</li> </ul>	<p>Work with your account executive to schedule your survey. It should be within 12 months of your application submission date.</p> <p>Log on and gain familiarity with your "Joint Commission Connect" extranet site, and review the "Survey Activity Guide" posted there for in-depth information on what happens during an on-site survey.</p>
<p>30 - ☒</p>	<p>☒</p> <p>Verification of survey dates and name(s) of surveyor(s) are communicated.</p>	<p>Call your Account Executive promptly if you have questions.</p>
<p>- ☒</p>	<p>Surveyor(s) arrive for your on-site survey. At the conclusion of the survey, you receive a copy of the summary report, which details the preliminary findings during the on-site survey.</p>	<p>During the survey, staff should be available as outlined on the survey agenda (See the Survey Activity Guide posted on your "Joint Commission Connect" website).</p>
<p>2 - 10 ☒</p>	<p>Your final report detailing your survey findings and your organization's accreditation decision is posted on your organization's extranet site. An email is sent to alert you that the final report has been posted. The invoice for the on-site fee is posted.</p>	<p>Review any findings and make plans for corrections (submitting an Evidence of Standards Compliance report) within the specified time ranges, usually 60 days.</p>



