

JCAHO to Shift to Unannounced Surveys by 2006

The board of commissioners of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has announced its intent to begin conducting all regular accreditation surveys on an unannounced basis beginning in January 2006. Unannounced surveys will be pilot-tested in volunteer organizations during 2004 and 2005.

JCAHO's plans to introduce a substantially new accreditation process beginning in January 2004 have been widely discussed with accredited healthcare organizations during the past year. The proposal to transition to unannounced surveys—approved by the board of commissioners at its March 28 to March 29 meeting—was a direct outgrowth of those discussions.

"The new accreditation process—dubbed Shared Visions-New Pathways—creates the expectation that each accredited organization be in compliance with 100% of the Joint Commission's standards 100% of the time," says Dennis S. O'Leary, MD, president, JCAHO. "Organization leaders whom we talked to not only agreed with this expectation, but further suggested that the next logical step would be the introduction of unannounced surveys."

"Shared Visions-New Pathways provides strong incentives for organizations to provide safe, high-quality care at all times; such organizations should be prepared for a JCAHO survey at any time."

says Bernard L. Hengesbaugh, chairman and public member, JCAHO board of commissioners. "Being ready for a thorough survey at any time is a logical extension of the accredited organization's commitment to continuous improvement."

Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, Ill., is the first hospital in the country to seek a totally unannounced accreditation review by JCAHO. The hospital requested the unannounced full survey, which will take place sometime in 2004, to demonstrate its continuous compliance with JCAHO quality and safety standards.

"It is quite an honor to be the first healthcare organization in the nation to experience this new process," says Edward S. Ogata, MD, CMO, Children's Memorial Hospital. "We are both exhilarated and eager to once again demonstrate the excellent clinical care for which this hospital is known."

During 2004, JCAHO expects to initiate pilot testing of the unannounced, triennial survey process in up to 100 hospitals that have volunteered to be among the first participants. Four multi-hospital systems and alliances—Ascension Health, Tenet Healthcare, Veterans Health Administration, and North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System—have committed to having a number of their hospitals participate in unannounced, triennial surveys in 2004 or 2005.



— Bernard L. Hengesbaugh, chairman and public member, JCAHO board of commissioners.

In 2005, JCAHO will continue to conduct voluntary, unannounced surveys on a limited basis—opening up the option to all types of accredited organizations—and then transition to a completely unannounced survey program in 2006. During this period, JCAHO will work closely with its various advisory groups, accredited organizations, and other stakeholder groups to gain their input and progressively refine the new accreditation process and smooth the transition to unannounced surveys.

JCAHO plans to continue to conduct one-day, random, unannounced surveys in an annual 5% sample of the healthcare organizations it accredits through the end of 2005. After that time, random, unannounced surveys will be discontinued.

— Source: Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

Werner Earns "First Class" Promotion

First Class Solutions, Inc. has announced that Jane E. Werner has been promoted to vice president of compliance and coding services. Werner has been employed with First Class Solutions, Inc. since 1992. She has directed the coding services for the organization since 1994 and principally performs compliance auditing and operational assessment functions, but has served as interim director of HIM for several hospitals in Florida, Indiana, and New York. Company COO Rose Dunn says, "Jane has always been considered part of the senior management team, and we're pleased to have such a loyal and qualified individual represent our firm."

— Source: First Class Solutions, Inc.

