

Subject Line: Update on Surveys Conducted During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last nine months, traditional onsite survey activity has been delayed or interrupted due to the restrictions and strain on the healthcare system caused by COVID-19. During the past few months, our Account Executives have reached out to customers to determine their readiness for survey. Now that the incidence and caseloads across the country are decreasing, effective March 15, 2021, we will be returning to our usual procedures prior to the pandemic. Organizations will no longer be receiving a phone call or email from their Account Executive when it has been determined the area is low risk for our accreditation survey team to visit. All available resources will be utilized to conduct onsite, unannounced accreditation surveys.

Organizations should continue to monitor the Notification of Scheduled Events section of their Joint Commission Connect® page for notification on the first day of the unannounced survey. Additionally, the Primary Accreditation Contact and CEO will continue to receive email notification of the scheduled event on the first day of the unannounced survey.

As a reminder, Joint Commission surveyors are considered essential workers and are following the most up-to-date CDC guidelines. While the survey team is onsite, they will continue:

Practicing safe physical distancing

Limiting the number of individuals in group sessions, minimizing the number of staff who accompany a surveyor or reviewer during tracer activities, driving in separate vehicles or, for surveyors and reviewers, their own vehicles to offsite locations or home visits.

Wearing personal protective equipment

Requiring Joint Commission surveyors and reviewers to wear masks, asking that health care organizations provide masks and/or other personal protective equipment to surveyors and reviewers.

Utilizing enhanced technology

Maximizing technology to support physical distancing (for example: using screen sharing or projection to review electronic medical records and interview care recipients or staff), incorporating audio/video conference calls to safely expand the number of meeting attendees.

The Joint Commission will continue to work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as an accrediting organization with deeming authority to conduct Medicare surveys by prioritizing organizations with accreditation due dates that are past due. An organization's existing accreditation remains in effect until a new survey takes place and a new accreditation decision has been rendered.

If an onsite survey is not possible in your area, your Account Executive will contact your organization to determine whether the survey event can be performed offsite/virtually, with an onsite evaluation taking place for those who meet the follow up requirement.

If there are extenuating circumstances that pose a significant challenge to your organization's ability to participate in a survey, please contact your Account Executive.

Thank you for all you do in providing healthcare to the population you serve.

Mark Pelletier, RN
Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Operating Officer
Accreditation and Certification Operations
The Joint Commission