

Preparing for Joint Commission inspections

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In the not-to-distant past, preparing for a survey by The Joint Commission meant ensuring your facility, policies, procedures, and documentation were in tip-top shape one specific week every three years. If you work in a hospital you know how this has changed.

With an assessment approach that requires institutions to be in a state of “continuous survey readiness”, The Joint Commission is raising the bar on performance throughout the entire three-year accreditation cycle. Today, a Joint Commission survey team can show up at your door step any time before the end of the tri-annual accreditation cycle.

A proactive approach

Healthcare providers can be prepared for inspections by being proactive. There are two predominant ways to plan for an unannounced Joint Commission inspection:

1. Assess, plan, prepare, practice, and improve. When a hospital continuously assesses their organizational performance a Joint Commission survey may not be as traumatic.

Hospitals running simulated hospital surveys are best prepared for the real thing. The "inspectors," much like their Joint Commission counterparts, arrive unannounced and begin the methodical process of reviewing compliance of each standard. This process should mimic those used by actual surveyors, following patient activities (tracers), inspecting, testing, questioning, reviewing, clarifying, and challenging. Perhaps most important is education, sharing results and findings so that each department and the organization as a whole understand potential deficiencies and can address these effectively. The bottom line includes both passing the real survey and most importantly, improving patient care.

2. Teamwork. Hardware and equipment rarely notify anyone when they decide to break or malfunction. It is important for hospital staff to report door and lock problems as soon as they are discovered. Preventative inspections and maintenance program can certainly help identify issues also. However, these are often limited to specific schedules. Staff reporting is critical.

Suffice it to say when staff members report problems there is an expectation that these will be resolved in a timely manner. When issues are not resolved, staff eventually get tired of calling, or frustrated, and either find their own solution or work around the problem. When a lock is not functioning properly and the lock shop is too busy to get to it, the door will be propped open. When the magnetic door release (tied to the fire alarm system) will not hold the door open, staff will find their own way to keep it open – even if it is a violation of fire code. Tracking maintenance requests, setting priorities, and communicating with staff are essential in garnering their ongoing cooperation.

Learn more about being prepared

Allegion has the expertise and solutions to help you set up and execute the measures outlined here to make your next Joint Commission survey go more smoothly. Be proactive - contact a professional security consultant in your area by calling **888.758.9823** or fill out the **Contact Us** form on our website at allegion.com.

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