

What you need to know about Joint Commission Primary Care Medical Home for Ambulatory Care

Definition and Purpose

Launched in July 2011, Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH) certification for Joint Commission accredited ambulatory care organizations focuses on care coordination, access to care, and how effectively a primary care clinician and interdisciplinary team work in partnership with the patient (and where applicable, their family). The PCMH certification option is consistent with the new federal health care reform efforts to improve health outcomes and the continuity, quality and efficiency of health care services.

The Joint Commission's PCMH certification option also focuses on education and self-management by the patient. Patients benefit from this model of care because they have increased access to their primary care clinician and interdisciplinary team; their care is tracked and coordinated; and increased use of health information technology supports their care.

The Joint Commission's PCMH certification option is based on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) definition of a medical home, which includes these core functions and attributes:

- **Patient-centered care** – Relationship-based care focuses on the whole person and understanding and respecting each patient's needs, culture, values and preferences.
- **Comprehensive care** – A team of providers (may include physicians, advanced practice nurses, physician assistants, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, mental health workers, social workers and others) work to meet each patient's physical and mental health care needs, including prevention and wellness, acute care and chronic care.
- **Coordinated care** – Care is coordinated across the broader health care system, including specialty care, hospitals, home care and community services and support. This is particularly critical during transitions between sites of care, such as when patients are discharged from the hospital.
- **Superb access to care** – Patients have access to services with shorter waiting times for urgent needs, enhanced in-person hours, around the clock telephone or electronic access to members of the care team, and alternative methods of communication such as e-mail and telephone.
- **Systems-based approach to quality and safety** – The PCMH uses evidence-based medicine and clinical decision support tools, engages in performance measurement and improvement, measures and responds to patient experiences and satisfaction, practices population health management, and publicly shares robust quality and safety data and improvement activities.

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Survey Process

Ambulatory care organizations seeking accreditation for the first time can also include the PCMH certification option. The PCMH requirements are incorporated into the ambulatory care on-site accreditation survey, including an enhanced tracer methodology process. Just like accreditation, the PCMH certification option applies to the entire organization, covers a three-year period, and is posted on the Quality Check portion of The Joint Commission's website.

Organizations currently accredited under the Ambulatory Care program and wishing to elect the PCMH option will have the following two choices:

- 1) Elect the PCMH option as part of your next re-accreditation survey, or
- 2) Request an unannounced special extension survey specific to the PCMH option before the next re-survey. Compared to the Ambulatory survey, this extension survey will be shorter and focused only on PCMH requirements.

Fees

There is an additional annual fee of \$300 (\$900 total for 3-year accreditation cycle) for organizations adding the PCMH certification option.

For More Information

The PCMH website for ambulatory care organizations (www.jointcommission.org/PCMH) includes a PCMH Self-Assessment Tool, comparisons and links to other resources. If you prefer, call (630) 792-5286, or e-mail pcmh@jointcommission.org.

The Joint Commission also offers a PCMH certification option to accredited [hospitals](#) and [behavioral health](#) care (Behavioral Health Home) organizations. Click the respective links for more information.

Questions about recognition? Contact Denise Henkel, Manager Payor Relations, via email (DHenkel@jointcommission.org) or by phone (630) 792-5202.