



National Commission on
Correctional Health Care

NCCHC Health Services Accreditation

providing the experience, expertise and credibility to help you achieve your goals

NCCHC Health Services Accreditation

NCCHC has a long history of working with corrections and health care professionals throughout the nation to make health care services in their facilities both cost effective and qualified to meet constitutional requirements and standards. Our success – and the success of facilities that have been accredited by NCCHC – is unprecedented.

Key Features

- NCCHC's *Standards for Health Services* are widely recognized by the medical profession as well as the courts as the benchmark standards for establishing or measuring a correctional facility's health services system.
- Accreditation by NCCHC is a mark of achievement that you can proudly share with government officials and community leaders. It means that your facility has been evaluated by a fully independent professional medical organization, well versed in the challenges of correctional health care delivery and unbiased in its determinations.
- NCCHC is unmatched in its correctional health care expertise. With the support of the nation's leading medical professional associations, NCCHC has helped define and guide the field of correctional health care for more than 25 years.
- NCCHC has an unsurpassed track record of accreditation. No other organization comes close to receiving the acceptance and recognition that goes along with NCCHC health services accreditation.

Health Services Standards

Accreditation is based on the NCCHC *Standards for Health Services*. The *Standards* are the recommended guidelines for managing the delivery of medical and mental health care within correctional systems.

The *Standards* were first developed in the 1970s as part of the American Medical Association's initiative to improve health services in the nation's correctional facilities. Since its incorporation in 1983, NCCHC has remained the guardian of this rich legacy of practice to promote quality health care in corrections.

Developed by experts from the professions of health, law and corrections, separate standards exist for health care delivery in jails, prisons, and juvenile detention and confinement facilities. The *Standards* provide clear-cut, easy-to-follow guidance on each standard's requirements and defined expectations. The areas covered by the *Standards* include:

- Health care services and support
- Inmate care and treatment
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Special inmate needs and services
- Health records
- Medical-legal issues
- Facility governance and administration
- Environmental health and safety
- Personnel and training

Benefits of Accreditation

- Promotes and documents an efficient, well-managed system of health care delivery
- Lends prestige to the facility
- Increases staff morale
- Aids recruiting efforts
- Helps to obtain community support
- Provides justification for budgetary requests
- Helps protect financial assets by minimizing the occurrence of adverse events. In many instances, accreditation reduces liability premiums and protects facilities from lawsuits related to health care.
- Protects the health of the public, staff and inmates by assuring that those incarcerated and released receive adequate and appropriate health care.

The Legal Context of Accreditation

In the 1976 landmark decision of *Estelle v. Gamble*, the Supreme Court ruled that prisoners have a right to be free of "deliberate indifference to their serious health care needs." Although there has been some fine-tuning, the legal landscape has remained largely unchanged.

In the hundreds of cases which have been published since *Estelle*, three basic rights have emerged: the right to access to care, the right to care that is ordered, and the right to a professional medical judgment. The failure to honor these rights has resulted in protracted litigation, the awarding of damages and attorneys' fees, and the issuance of injunctions regarding the delivery of health care services.

The best correctional facilities have adopted procedures, using NCCHC's standards as a guide, that provide constitutional care to inmates and that protect them from litigation. Because litigation is so expensive, efforts to achieve compliance with NCCHC's standards and to gain accreditation is well worth the effort.

Facilities that meet NCCHC's standards and achieve accreditation are frequently regarded favorably by the courts. There are no correctional health care standards that are more stringent nor an accreditation program as thorough as the National Commission on Correctional Health Care's. In case after case, NCCHC's standards have been held as the model to which correctional facilities should strive.

As resources become increasingly scarce and you are faced with doing more with less, compliance with NCCHC's standards will help you avoid costly and time consuming litigation, and preserve expenditure of resources that would be better spent elsewhere. Your voluntary compliance with NCCHC's standards demonstrates to government officials, the public and the courts your understanding of the legal requirements of correctional health care.

*Adapted from NCCHC's Standards for Health Services
"The Legal Context of Accreditation"
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Obtaining Accreditation

Initial Steps

The first step in the accreditation process is to review the *Standards for Health Services* appropriate to your correctional setting and to complete an application for accreditation. You can review and download the accreditation application on our Web site at www.ncchc.org/accred. When your application has been received, you will receive a self-survey questionnaire (SSQ), which will help you prepare for the on-site survey.

The On-site Survey

Once you feel you are ready, the on-site survey is scheduled. The length of the survey depends on the size of your facility and the complexity of health services provided, but, on average, is usually 2 to 3 days in length.

Our survey teams are made up of experienced physicians, nurses, health administrators, and other health professionals who understand corrections and combine that knowledge with their professional expertise. While on site, they will conduct a review of medical records as well as policies and procedures; interviews with health staff, correctional officers and inmates; and a tour of the facility. At the end of the survey, an exit conference will be conducted to discuss their preliminary findings.

NCCHC approaches surveys as an educational experience for you and your staff. We are committed to helping you achieve compliance with the standards and to benefit from the accreditation experience.

Accreditation Decisions

Upon completion of the site visit, the survey team submits a report that is presented to NCCHC's accreditation committee. The committee reviews all reports blindly and renders a determination of compliance with the standards. Facilities may submit documentation of any corrective action prior to the meeting, and the committee may grant time following the meeting for a facility to achieve full compliance. The facility will receive a comprehensive written report that includes recommendations to assist your continuing compliance with the standards.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does NCCHC accredit small facilities as well as large?

A: Absolutely! NCCHC accredits facilities of all shapes and sizes. Correctional facilities with as few as 20 beds and as many as 12,000 beds are accredited by NCCHC.

Q: What if some of the standards do not apply to our facility?

A: NCCHC takes a practical approach to the accreditation process. Only those standards that apply to your facility are employed in the facility evaluation. For instance, if your facility does not have an infirmary, then it does not need to comply with the standard on infirmary care. Similarly, if a facility does not house female inmates, it does not need to comply with the standards on care of the pregnant inmate or pregnancy counseling.

Q: How much does accreditation cost?

A: There is a nonrefundable \$250 application fee. After that, the cost of accreditation is based on the facility type (i.e., jail, prison, juvenile), its average daily population, whether or not it has satellite operations, what special medical services it provides, and other factors. With this information in hand, we will provide an estimate of accreditation fees. After accreditation has been achieved, there is a subsequent annual fee.

Technical Assistance

Besides being the preeminent authority in establishing standards for correctional health care, NCCHC also is an invaluable resource for correctional facilities grappling with difficult health care issues. With our extensive network of experts in all sectors of correctional medical and mental health care, as well as our unsurpassed history of helping correctional systems provide health care efficiently and effectively, NCCHC can help you find appropriate solutions.

Informal, ongoing assistance on accreditation issues is provided at no charge to accredited facilities. Formal technical assistance programs are available for a fee that is based on the nature of the assistance, the time it will require, and the number of consultants needed. As a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping you provide effective health care services, NCCHC takes pride in keeping costs as low as possible. At your request, we will develop a proposal that details the assistance we will provide and the associated costs.

Customized Consultation

NCCHC offers customized consultation to systems or individual facilities preparing for accreditation, developing policies and procedures, reviewing alternative solutions to difficulties, implementing risk assessment and management, seeking expert testimony and much more.

The following recent consultations reflect the scope and diversity of the ways we can help: addressing staffing concerns for a county jail with growing health care needs and financial constraints; evaluating a jail system's health service delivery against national standards at the request of county commissioners; helping a small juvenile facility establish an effective receiving screening program; and working with a state correctional system to develop and implement a quality improvement system.

Depending on your needs and preferences, assistance may be provided simply by telephone, or it might entail on-site review, specific recommendations with instructions for how to implement programs, or hands-on assistance in implementing and monitoring solutions.

Although each technical assistance is unique to the client, common threads do exist. There is no charge for the initial consultation and development of a proposal. If requested, proposals may contain several options as to the extent and cost of the consultation. Fees are based on the number of consultants, the nature of the assistance and the time it requires. Most clients find the technical assistance to be surprisingly affordable.

While most technical assistances take place over a period of 1 to 2 days, the continuum ranges from half-day presentations to ongoing consultations. Documentation of findings and recommendations is provided in as much detail as the client requests, and the client is able to review the draft and make suggestions.

OTP Accreditation

In 2004 NCCHC launched an accreditation program for opioid treatment programs (OTP) in correctional facilities. Accreditation by NCCHC allows OTPs to obtain legally required certification from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

One of only six accrediting bodies so authorized by SAMHSA and the only one focusing on corrections, NCCHC has developed standards that comply with federal regulations and that recognize the special nature of correctional facilities. Health services accreditation by NCCHC is not required to seek OTP accreditation.

Let NCCHC Be Your Guide

Let NCCHC be your guide as you navigate the complex world of correctional health care. Our *Standards for Health Services* are the foundation, enumerating the recommended requirements for correctional health services. But beyond that, we offer customized technical assistance to facilities and systems striving to meet the standards, position statements that address emerging issues not covered in the standards, and clinical guidelines that help health care providers manage care for patients with critical chronic diseases. These and other resources are available on the NCCHC Web site at www.ncchc.org.

The Health Status of Soon-to-be-Released Inmates: A Report to Congress

This national, three-year study was the largest and most comprehensive of its kind ever undertaken. With funding from Congress through the National Institute of Justice, and with substantial support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Commission convened expert panels that included the nation's most respected researchers, practitioners and scholars in the fields of public and correctional health care.

The report documents that public investment in improved correctional health care can result in cost savings to the public and protection of the public's health. It validates the importance of correctional health care and can be used to help educate the public and advocate for additional resources. Corrections and correctional health professionals have used the report to support increased funding and better community relations.

Clinical Guidelines

The National Commission has adopted several clinical guidelines to help correctional health care professionals effectively manage diseases commonly found in jails, prisons and juvenile facilities. The guidelines are adapted for the correctional environment from nationally accepted clinical guidelines prepared by other organizations, including the National Institutes of Health; the American Diabetes Association; the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They are written in a way to specifically help correctional health care providers improve patient care outcomes.

The guidelines encourage total disease management, which requires clear indicators of the degree of control of the patient's disease and, frequently, the more subtle distinction as to whether the condition is stable, improving or deteriorating. The guidelines also alert the health care provider to barriers to appropriate treatment commonly found in correctional facilities. However, the guidelines cannot and do not substitute for individual clinical professional judgment based upon a specific patient's presentation.

Currently, NCCHC has guidelines that address asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and HIV. Guidelines are being developed for specific mental health conditions and juvenile illnesses.

Position Statements

Occasionally, an issue arises that has not been addressed by the *Standards for Health Services*, or medical/technical advances have occurred since the *Standards* were last revised. Accordingly, NCCHC has adopted several position statements that, along with the published standards, may assist correctional facilities in designing policies and procedures on these matters.

www.ncchc.org

About NCCHC

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care's mission is to improve the quality of health care in jails, prisons and juvenile confinement facilities. With support from the major national organizations representing the fields of health, law and corrections, NCCHC's leadership in setting standards for health services is widely recognized. In addition to health services accreditation, NCCHC offers a broad array of resources to help correctional health care systems provide efficient, high quality care.

Educational Programs

The National Conference on Correctional Health Care is the must-attend event of the year. With exceptional educational programs, abundant networking and the best exhibition in this market, this five-day Fall conference attracts thousands of dedicated professionals.

Similar in format but smaller in scale, our Spring meeting, Updates in Correctional Health Care, is popular for its content-rich program and cutting-edge topics presented in a four-day format. NCCHC also offers two-day meetings that delve into important topics such as mental health care and legal issues in correctional health care.

Certification

The Certified Correctional Health Professional program recognizes the professionalism of health care providers

from a variety of disciplines and settings in the correctional field. The highly regarded CCHP designation has been awarded to thousands of professionals nationwide who have demonstrated mastery of national standards and the special knowledge and skills expected of leaders in this complex and ever-changing field.

Publications and Resources

NCCHC offers the best publications in correctional health care. Our growing catalog offers essential titles such as NCCHC's *Standards for Health Services* and *Correctional Health Care: Guidelines for the Management of an Adequate Delivery System*. Two quarterlies, CORRECTCARE and the *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, are the leading periodicals in this field. We also offer reference works from other publishers, as well as free access to clinical guidelines, position statements and other resources on our Web site (www.nchc.org).

Supporting Organizations

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Academy of Psychiatry & the Law
American Association for Correctional Psychology
American Association of Physician Specialists
American Association of Public Health Physicians
American Bar Association
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Healthcare Executives
American College of Neuropsychiatrists
American College of Physicians - American Society of Internal Medicine
American Correctional Health Services Association
American Counseling Association
American Dental Association
American Diabetes Association
American Dietetic Association
American Health Information Management Association

American Jail Association
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
John Howard Association
National Association of Counties
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National District Attorneys Association
National Juvenile Detention Association
National Medical Association
National Sheriffs' Association
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society of Correctional Physicians



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