

Benefits of National Accreditation

By Jennifer Flowers, Founder & CEO, Accreditation Guru, Inc.

Achieving accreditation offers human service organizations professional recognition for meeting quality standards in service delivery. It also provides clients and other key stakeholders with an appropriate tool for effectively evaluating service providers. Organizations that earn accreditation have reached beyond the minimum licensing standards and made a long-term commitment to strong governance, program consistency, outcome measurements and continuous improvement throughout their agencies.

Accreditation requires an organization to undergo an objective review by an independent accrediting body. Becoming accredited signifies that an organization is effectively managing its resources and enhancing the quality of life of persons served.

ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- > Improved administration and management practices
- > Enhanced internal policies, procedures and protocols
- > May reduce liability insurance costs via risk management efforts
- > Improved stakeholder communications
- > Enriched service planning and related documentation
- > Improved safety procedures
- > Expanded private-payer payment approvals
- > May fulfill regulatory requirements in certain states
- > May qualify for deemed status to be exempt from certain parts of a state's licensing process
- > Better positioning to manage organizational growth

COSTS INVOLVED:

Each accrediting body calculates its own application fees, survey costs and annual fees. Costs may vary widely based on the revenue size of the organization being reviewed, and/or the number of programs and locations. Staff time, operational improvements and consultants may all add to overall expenditures.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS:

Many organizations take 12 to 18 months to prepare for national accreditation, some more, some less, depending on the original state of readiness. All accrediting bodies require active maintenance of accreditation along with an onsite survey repeated at the end of every three- or four-year accreditation cycle.

A WORD ABOUT MANDATES:

Many organizations underestimate the time necessary to prepare for and become accredited. In addition, accrediting bodies only have a finite amount of capacity at any given time. All service providers need to be encouraged to begin the accreditation process as soon as possible and reminded often to stay on track.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS ADDRESS:

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Governance and strategic planning
- Ethical practices
- Finances
- Risk management
- Technology and IT
- Performance improvement
- Workforce development and training
- Health and safety of clients & staff
- Client rights
- Protection of health information
- Input from persons served and other stakeholders

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROVIDED

- Service philosophy
- Accurate and timely documentation
- Intake and assessments
- Person-centered planning
- Promoting non-violent practices
- Medication management after promoting non-violent practices
- Child placement
- Family connections
- Discharge and transition planning

98%

Percentage of accredited organizations that say the accreditation process has helped them improve Health and Safety, Service Delivery, Risk Management, Documentation and Performance Improvement.

[Source: CARF International]

