

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) is currently revising its standards for accreditation to “advance effective communication, cultural competence and patient-centered care.” These changes in standards are under review and would take place in January 2011 at the earliest. These revised standards much more specifically include cultural competence and language access issues in previously vague descriptions that only implied responsibility for cultural competency. These revised standards include increased ongoing diversity training, required cultural competency assessments, required education of providers on how and when to use language access services, and increased regulation of documentation of language access needs.

The current standards that pertain to these issues are also available online at <http://www.jointcommission.org/NR/rdonlyres/B48B39E3-107D-495A-9032-24C3EBD96176/0/PDF32009HAPSupportingStds.pdf>. The general requirements for accreditation are summarized below:

*Staff Training on Cultural Sensitivity:* The hospital should provide staff appropriate orientation to cultural competency issues that are a part of their job.

*Staff and Licensed Independent Practitioner Training on the Use of Communication Tools:* The provider is responsible for coordinating the patient’s care and services and should receive ongoing training regarding this topic.

*Use of Population- and Patient- Level Demographic Data:* The hospital provides services that meet the needs of their patients.

*Assessment of Patient Understanding:* The hospital should determine if the patient understands the information being presented to them.

*Inclusion of Health Literacy Needs in Learning Needs Assessment:* The hospital performs a learning needs assessment for each patient, which takes into account their cultural, emotional and cognitive barriers to learning.

*Collection of Patient-level Demographic Data:* The medical record should contain the patient’s language and communication needs as well as other personal information.

*Accommodation of Patients’ Cultural and Personal Beliefs:* The hospital respects the patient’s cultural and personal values and preferences.

*Accommodation of Patients’ Religious and Spiritual Practices:* The hospital respects the patient’s right to religious and spiritual services.

*Inform Patients of Right to Receive Language Access Services:* The hospital respects the right of the patient to receive information in a way the patient can understand; the hospital will provide interpreter and translator services.

