



READY,  
SET,  
JCAHO!

**THIRD EDITION**

New Questions,  
Games, and Other  
Strategies to Prepare  
Your Staff for Survey

**Kathryn A. Chamberlain, CPHQ**

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## SECTION

# I

## Planning and Organizing

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### Getting started

If you have been responsible for your organization's standards compliance for any length of time, you already know that preparing employees, leaders, physicians, volunteers, students, and board members for a JCAHO survey can be difficult. Everyone is busy and has other interests and demands on their time that distract from the message you are trying to communicate. In addition, each group may respond differently to the information/tools you use. Therefore, it's critical that you know your audience and use that knowledge to select the approach that best meets their needs. Don't burden them with information that is not pertinent to their role in the organization; focus on topics that are meaningful to them.

### Barriers to consider

Some common trouble spots you will have to overcome as you develop an annual training plan include:

#### **I don't have time for this!**

Physicians, executives, board members, and department managers are busy, and they have difficulty attending additional meetings or paying attention to information they may consider to be extraneous. To get their attention, request to be invited to their regular meetings, and then educate them with tailored, bulleted handouts they may use throughout the process.

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### **Communicating to the masses**

In most hospitals, some groups—such as the nursing and medical staffs—are large. Take steps to ensure that communication is consistent across an entire group. You may need to use existing department or service meetings or hold shift meetings. You also may need to develop multiple ways to deliver the same message, depending on how you think a group learns best.

### **Just give me the facts!**

No one wants to be deluged with information that they perceive to be needless, especially if they don't understand it or feel that they never will use it. Therefore, tailor all information to each audience. If you are not sure what information is appropriate for a particular staff group or department, work with managers and other leaders to find out. Infection control for environmental staff, for example, is different from infection control in the surgical suite.

### **We don't do that here!**

The culture of an organization may dictate what types of activities you select. For example, one organization's "potty training" campaign (i.e., JCAHO tips posted in staff bathrooms; see Section IV) may be totally unacceptable in your organization. If you have doubts about the appropriateness of a training method, consult your human resources or staff development department.

### **Who's going to pay for this?**

No healthcare organization has unlimited resources. Whether the constraints are money, time, or prioritization, maintaining survey readiness and standards compliance must be accomplished using only available resources. Therefore, plan ahead to develop a reasonable budget. Involve key stakeholders when developing plans that make significant demands on time or conflict with other organizational priorities. Be realistic.

### **Survey countdown v. survey readiness**

In the best of all worlds, survey preparation is continuous and methodical in the three years between surveys. Reality, however, often tells a different story. The days of scheduled surveys are dwindling, and the challenge now is to be ready for survey at any time. Therefore, focus on standards that have given your organization difficulty in the past—previous Type I’s, requirements for improvement, compliance issues identified by your PPR, new standards and requirements such as the National Patient Safety Goals, and those standards that the JCAHO releases annually as the most-cited standards for hospitals during surveys.

### **Create your continuous survey preparation training plan**

Educators tell us that information should be presented in at least three ways to reach staff at all learning levels and to make it stick. Consider all the possibilities. Create your own annual plan with the help of the suggestions and the examples in this book, which can be customized to suit your organization’s culture and audience. The following tips may help get your creative juices flowing:

1. Review your PPR and action plans to identify the compliance issues that require education. List the target groups for each topic to give you an idea of the resources you need.
2. Ask staff development, organizational development, and senior management staff to list the educational approaches that have been most successful in your organization. Doing so is especially helpful if you are new to the organization or new to your position.
3. Ask survey managers and staff members what they need to prepare their staff for the next JCAHO visit.

## **SECTION I**

4. Be sure to include all departments, including all off-site services, in your planning of training programs. In complex organizations, this task may be a challenge, but if your accreditation extends to off-sites, then those sites must be as survey-ready as the main hospital site. The tracer methodology means that surveyors may visit any department or service location—and they do.
5. Before you get too far into your planning, verify the budget resources available to purchase training materials or incentives or to hire outside educators, such as consultants.
6. Review other projects that are competing for training time. Meet with the chief executive officer, chief operating officer, and other executives to gain their support for your annual survey preparation plan. Be realistic about the time commitment managers and staff can make.
7. Enlist the assistance of the marketing or public relations department as you prepare a publicity campaign focused on JCAHO compliance.
8. Include graded quizzes or tests for some preparation activities to drive home the point that it's important to know the information presented. Give awards or prizes for good scores.
9. Consider forming an advisory team with some of the talented experts and educators in your organization. This group will make a great sounding board for your ideas. They also can be champions for ongoing JCAHO survey preparation within the organization.



10. Whenever possible, promote teamwork in your survey preparation activities. Doing so reinforces that teamwork is required to provide care and services to patients and should have a positive impact on tracer interviews.

## **How to make your ongoing training activities successful**

When planning any training activity, begin by defining your desired outcome. Then consider your audience and determine what approach you should take to obtain that outcome. The checklist in Figure 1.1 can help you organize your ideas and document your training plan for each topic.

You may want to be more detailed in your planning and to map out the topics you must present to each audience, your planned approaches, or how the information relates to the JCAHO survey process. Slicing the information in this way has two benefits:

1. You are able to track all the events you need to schedule
2. You are able to communicate to others the scope of training required

Figure 1.2 provides three examples of charts you could use for this purpose. You can enhance these charts by adding columns of training dates or space in which to indicate that training is complete. Add any other information that may be helpful to you. Then, once the charts are complete, consider distributing them to leadership, posting them on bulletin boards, or keeping them strictly for your own use.

## **More strategies for success**

### **Enlist the support of senior leadership**

All survey preparation activities are more likely to succeed if they have the enthu-

## **SECTION I**

siastic endorsement of the key leaders in your organization. At minimum, the chief executive officer, the chief operating officer, nurse executive, and president of the medical staff/medical director should voice support and express the importance of attending training sessions and maintaining survey readiness.

To gain such support, be sensitive to these leaders' time constraints when planning sessions for them and their staff. For instance, meet with nursing leadership when planning training for nursing staff. You may be able to coordinate your training plans with their continuing education plans. If they are planning a restraint refresher course for core competency, you may be able to review it to ensure that all required JCAHO elements are included. Or you may assist with the evaluation tool so that you have the feedback you need.

To identify the best approach and most realistic schedule for physician training, meet with medical staff leadership to discuss it. Be sure to include interns and residents in your plan if you are at a teaching hospital.

For all leadership, be flexible in scheduling the training, even if it means changing your own schedule, because they have little free time. One advantage to including leaders is that they learn quickly and don't need much time to pick up important concepts. Therefore, ask leaders to be present for at least some of the training sessions that include their staff. Leader participation sends a powerful message about the importance of maintaining survey readiness and standards compliance.

Also, try to get JCAHO prep on their regular agendas, which would enable you to give them updates on your progress with survey preparation and provide them with important information they need for survey day. Most leaders will appreciate your consideration of their busy schedules.

**Offer rewards**

Even simple rewards generate interest and enthusiasm in something as dry as JCAHO survey prep. Many organizations find that employees who otherwise may not be motivated to participate in a training session may actually become promoters of the activity when you offer rewards such as free movie passes to the first five employees drawn from all who receive 100% in a test. In addition, rewarding a shy, quiet employee can give that person the confidence he or she needs to answer with assurance a surveyor's questions. And rewarding a seemingly unwilling participant may make it possible to gain that employee's support for the next activity.

The rewards do not have to be expensive. You can stay within your budget by asking local vendors to donate small prizes, such as a free pizza or a grocery store gift certificate. Consider other inexpensive gifts, such as free coffee in the cafeteria for a week or a special parking spot. You can also recognize employees by posting their pictures on a "JCAHO Experts" bulletin board or by publishing in a newsletter the names of those who score 80% or better on post-training quizzes.

**Build friendly competition**

Departments can vie for greatest level of participation in required training programs. They can tabulate scores on white boards and rank departments, then give prizes to the top five. Some of the games presented in Section IV lend themselves well to team competition. This is a great way to take advantage of the natural tendency staff members have to compete against one another to do a good job.

**Provide enough lead-time for training dates**

Participation will be much higher if you notify managers, supervisors, and staff well in advance of the training/activity dates and times. Doing so allows managers

## **SECTION I**

and supervisors to plan coverage and ensures that everyone who needs to attend a session is free to do so. Use all the communication tools available to you: consider newsletters, e-mails, memos, staff meetings, bulletin boards, voicemail, etc.

### **Stress good patient care, not just JCAHO standards compliance**

Survey coordinators know that there's a natural tendency for some staff to balk when told that they have to do something for the JCAHO survey. You may have more success if you promote patient safety as the focus for the training, which ultimately is the goal of JCAHO accreditation. When training staff in fire safety or moderate sedation, for example, the key points you want to make will contribute to the best outcome:

- If there's a fire, we want to be sure that patients and staff exit safely
- If we administer moderate sedation, we want to be sure that the patient suffers no untoward effects

The fact that the JCAHO requires the same things is simply because its standards reflect acceptable current practice in healthcare organizations.

### **Support continuous training and performance improvement**

Constant survey readiness is the goal of any organization. Ideally, ongoing training and performance improvement ensure survey readiness. And, as all surveys become unannounced, whatever you can do in your organization to support a program of constant readiness helps the organization have a successful survey. Likewise, as the PPR self-assessment requirement becomes annual, it will be more difficult to let things slide until your next survey.

**Focus activities on hot topics**

Each year the JCAHO releases new standards and new areas of emphasis. The hot topics for healthcare organizations include the following:

*Patient safety*

Comply with the National Patient Safety Goals, released each year, and respond to sentinel events in your organization. Pay attention to *Sentinel Event Alerts* from the JCAHO on other topics, as appropriate to your organization.

*Infection control*

Growing concern about deaths and injuries related to healthcare-associated infections, coupled with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requirements for hand hygiene, have brought infection control to the forefront. Surveyors are observing staff as they practice and asking pointed questions in their patient and system tracers.

*Medication use*

This topic may belong under the umbrella of patient safety, but it has taken on a life of its own in accreditation because of the focus of the medication management standards during survey. Emergency and routine medications in all departments and settings must be stored, dispensed, and administered in a safe and effective manner. Therefore, this area is important for survey preparation and for a heavy focus during survey.

*Use of data*

The JCAHO has grown impatient with organizations that collect reams of data with little evidence of actual improvement. Through discussions with all levels of staff, surveyors will assess how well you analyze and utilize data to effect change.

## **SECTION I**

Therefore, focus survey preparation activities so that staff are able to show that they know how data are used in improvement activities.

### *Assessment*

Organizations continue to have difficulty demonstrating consistent compliance with the assessment requirements, so be sure you have clear evidence that all patients are assessed in the same manner at all times, for all required elements. Also, be sure that staff can explain their roles in this important process.

### *Environment of care*

In response to federal findings that the JCAHO has not consistently identified many of the environment of care issues identified in Medicare validation surveys, the JCAHO has increased its emphasis on this aspect of the standards and added an engineer to surveys of organizations with 200 or more beds. Staff must be prepared to answer questions and provide documentation in this area of JCAHO requirements, which includes the *Life Safety Code*®.

### *Competence*

As organizations continue to use agency and temporary staff to fill voids, the JCAHO continues to scrutinize the processes used to ensure that all clinical staff members are competent. Therefore, be sure you have a comparable program for competence of agency personnel. Know the JCAHO's staffing effectiveness standards.

Emphasize these hot topics in your preparation plans and monitor the JCAHO Web site for additions or deletions to standards (changes are made often).

### **Evaluate training activities**

It is important that you evaluate your training activities for effectiveness. In the areas where employees do poorly, consider other strategies for getting them up to an acceptable level of performance to ensure survey readiness.

Consider developing assessment tools like the one in Figure 1.3 to provide the necessary feedback. You can also use quizzes. Ask staff to suggest ways of making the training more effective, especially if you identify a particular problem area. Share the results of the training programs with managers and supervisors, and ask them for suggestions as well. They know their staffs and may have insight into other changes that would make training more meaningful.

You may wish to develop a tracking sheet to summarize the outcome of the training activities; such a sheet can help you determine which approaches to use that need to be revamped in the future. Such a tracking sheet is included in Figure 1.4. If you decide to use it, be sure to keep it current; it is more difficult to track training retrospectively, when information is no longer fresh in your mind and you have to go digging through files for it.

### **Offer various types of training activities**

The remainder of this book offers training activities that may or may not have application in your organization. Games, events, and tools such as those in Section IV are included for your consideration or modification. Many are available on the CD-ROM. Meld them with the tips provided in this section, as well as with your own personal knowledge of what works, and you should have a preparation plan that meets the unique needs of your organization.

Most of the activities are centered around some type of question-and-answer format. Therefore, we have devoted a large portion of the book to identifying the key questions your staff should be able to answer. You should find this especially helpful when practicing tracers.

## **SECTION I**

Note that a game such as a word search may work for some audiences, others (like senior leaders) may do much better with a straightforward sheet of questions and answers. And certain activities may lend themselves to certain types of questions. For example, JCAHO Trivia works well with questions that have only one or two correct answers, while a JCAHO Carnival uses several types of questions.

As you plan, remember that anything you can do to make the activities more interesting to participants helps engage your audience and, ultimately, produces a better outcome—a successful survey. It's not always appropriate to try to make an activity fun, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to engage them in the material. Be creative!



Figure 1.1

**Survey Preparation Training Plan**

1. Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Brief description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Focus of program (check all that apply):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human resources           | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient rights                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership                | <input type="checkbox"/> Performance improvement/<br>patient safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management of information | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment of care/safety                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patient care/assessment   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____               |   |

4. How educational need was identified (check all that apply):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual performance review | <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment user errors        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety rounds             | <input type="checkbox"/> Infection control reports    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality measurement       | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous training activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mock survey               | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer review                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____               |   |

5. Activity objectives: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Scope:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizationwide  | <input type="checkbox"/> Job-specific     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-functional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Departmental      |   |

Figure 1.1

**Survey Preparation Training Plan (cont.)**

7. Target audience (who? how many?): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Duration/Frequency:**

- Ongoing       One-time survey preparation  
 Orientation     Annual             Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Type of activity:**

- Game                       Event                       Workshop  
 Demonstration       Discussion                       Video/

Audio tape

- Lecture/Presentation     Written/Poster  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. Materials available: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Materials requiring preparation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Location of training activity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Promotion/notification of activity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Method/timing for evaluation of effectiveness: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1.2

**Sample Training Assessment Tools**

**Detail For Each Target Audience**

Topic	Medical Staff	Clinical Staff	Nonclin. Staff	Mgrs. & Sups.	Execs.	Board
Restraints	•	•		•	•	
-Overview				•	•	
-Detail	•	•				
Patient Safety	•	•	•	•	•	•
-Program		•	•	•	•	•
-Details						

**Most Effective Approach For Each Target Audience**

Topic	Medical Staff	Clinical Staff	Non-Clin. Staff	Mgrs. & Sups.	Execs.	Board
Safety	•	•		•	•	•
-Demonstration						
-Self-Learning Packet	•				•	
-Presentation		•	•	•	•	•
-Competition		•	•			
Moderate Sedation						
-Video						
-Quiz						
-Self-Learning Packet						

**Topics by Survey Interviews/Sessions**

Topic	HR	Care	Patient Safety	Patient Visit	Unit Interview	EC Leadership
Competence	•			•		•
Moderate Sedation		•				•
Medication Use		•	•	•		•

**Figure  
1.3**

**Training Activity Evaluation Form**

**Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional Info)

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your level of agreement:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The activity provided useful information.	1	2	3	4
The information was understandable. Format and manner were acceptable.	1	2	3	4
My knowledge of this topic was increased.	1	2	3	4
I feel better prepared for the JCAHO survey.	1	2	3	4
The material provided will help me prepare for the survey.	1	2	3	4

Figure  
1.3

**Training Activity Evaluation Form (cont.)**

1. What new information did you learn from this activity?

---

---

---

2. What topics, if any, were confusing or needed more emphasis?

---

---

---

3. Do you have any ideas for future survey preparation activities?

---

---

---

4. Additional comments/suggestions:

---

---

---

**SECTION I**

**Figure  
1.4**

**Training Activity Tracking Form**

Replace or retain					
Least effective components					
Most effective components					
Date(s) held					
Target audience					
Activity/tool					

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