

PROGRAM ASSISTANCE LETTER

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TO: Health Center Program

I. PURPOSE

This Program Assistance Letter (PAL) describes the Accreditation and Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative, and outlines the process and requirements for applying for ambulatory health care accreditation and/or patient centered medical home (PCMH) recognition. The Accreditation and Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative consolidates into a single initiative various accreditation and recognition resources that have been developed by HRSA and its national partners.

This PAL supersedes Policy Information Notice (PIN) 2007-17: Accreditation Initiative for Contract Year 2007, PAL 2009-12: Accreditation Initiative Update, and PAL 2011-01: HRSA Patient Centered Medical/Health Home Initiative.

II. ACCREDITATION AND PATIENT CENTERED MEDICAL HOME RECOGNITION INITIATIVE

HRSA continues to support the advancement and acceleration of quality improvement efforts, building on experience with and an ongoing commitment to, quality improvement across the Health Center Program. These efforts represent crucial steps towards sustaining even greater advances in quality of care, health outcomes, and disparity reductions across all health centers.

HRSA encourages and supports health centers to undergo rigorous and comprehensive survey processes and achieve national benchmarks that demonstrate the highest standards of health care quality. Ambulatory health care accreditation and PCMH recognition received from an independent, national review body demonstrates a health center's commitment to providing high quality health care services and improving patient experiences, health outcomes, and safety.

The Accreditation and Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative provides resources for health centers to achieve health care accreditation and PCMH recognition through nationally recognized organizations. All section 330 funded health centers are eligible to receive HRSA's accreditation and recognition resources/services under this Initiative by submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI) as outlined in section III of this PAL. Health centers have three options for receiving accreditation and/or recognition.

Accreditation

Health centers may select either The Joint Commission or the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) to obtain ambulatory health care accreditation under this Initiative. Accreditation is a process that evaluates health center quality and patient safety using established standards focused on quality improvement, quality assurance, risk management, and performance improvement. Key features of the accreditation process include:

- Accreditation options include ambulatory health care, laboratory, and behavioral health services through an on-site survey. A PCMH option is also available.
- Based on the experience of grantees, the average amount of time needed to become accredited is 9 to 12 months following HRSA approval of a NOI.
- Accreditation is awarded at the health center organization level, and the accreditation status remains in effect for 3 years.

Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition

Health centers can obtain PCMH recognition through the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) under this Initiative. PCMH recognition is a process that evaluates health center approaches to patient centered care. Health centers can achieve PCMH recognition by meeting national standards for care coordination and communication in primary care settings that improve the patient and provider experience. Key features of the NCQA PCMH recognition process include:

- PCMH recognition surveys are conducted through an online survey tool that includes documentation that the health center has implemented PCMH standards, for each applicable health center site.
- Based on the experience of grantees, the average amount of time needed to become recognized is 3 to 12 months following HRSA approval of a NOI.
- The PCMH recognition status for each health center site recognized remains in effect for 3 years.

III. NOTICE OF INTENT PROCESS

Participation in HRSA's Accreditation and Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative is voluntary. Interested health centers must notify HRSA of their intent to participate by [submitting a Notice of Intent \(NOI\)](#) in the HRSA EHBs. In the EHBs, go to the Grant Folder and click the 'HRSA Accreditation/PCMH Initiative' link. Health centers must select the appropriate accreditation or PCMH organization as part of the NOI submission.

NOI Form

Specific instructions are provided for each section and question on the NOI form. Required information is marked with a red asterisk and must be completed before advancing and submitting the form. The NOI requires health centers to provide the following information:

- Contact information for the health center
- Contact information for the recognition or accreditation process point of contact
- Site level information, including name, address, and individual site number assigned by HRSA in the Notice of Award (referred to as BPS ID number)
- Type of survey requested

Health centers seeking The Joint Commission or AAAHC accreditation will need to provide the total number of sites currently in health center's approved scope of project. Health centers seeking NCQA PCMH recognition will need to provide information about the total number of sites seeking recognition.

NOI Submission and Review Process

Health centers must submit an NOI for initial surveys as well as re-accreditation or renewal surveys to maintain accreditation or PCMH recognition status. For re-accreditation or renewal surveys, health centers should submit their NOI at least 6 months in advance of expiration date. All NOIs will be reviewed for organizational readiness to undertake the accreditation or PCMH recognition process. Health centers should allow 2 to 4 weeks for HRSA review following submission.

IV. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Technical assistance resources are available through State/Regional Primary Care Associations, and the accreditation and PCMH recognition organizations. These organizations have developed specific technical assistance resources tailored to meet the needs of health centers. Webinars, web based learning modules, tool kits, and consultation are available for pre-survey, survey process, and post-survey activities and may be accessed on the following websites.

- The Joint Commission [website](#)
- AAAHC [website](#)
- NCQA [website](#)
- Consult your State/Regional Primary Care Associations [website](#)



V. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For questions or additional information regarding the Accreditation and Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative, please visit the Accreditation and PCMH [Web Form](#) or the [BPHC Helpline](#) or call 1-877-974-BPHC (2742).

Additional information regarding the AAAHC survey process is available at <http://www.aaahc.org/en/accreditation/FQCHCs/> or by contacting Mona Sweeney at msweeney@aaahc.org or (847) 324-7487.

Additional information regarding The Joint Commission survey process is available at http://www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/bureau_of_primary_health_care.aspx or by contacting Pam Komperda at PKomperda@jointcommission.org or (630) 792-5551.

Additional information regarding the NCQA survey process is available at <http://www.ncqa.org/programs/recognition/practices/government-recognition-initiative-projects-grip> or by contacting PCMH-GRIP@ncqa.org or Customer Support at (888) 275-7585.

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