

# PROGRAM ASSISTANCE LETTER

**DOCUMENT NUMBER:** 2022-04

**DATE:** September 1, 2022

**DOCUMENT TITLE:** Accreditation and Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative

**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, PAL 2011-01: HRSA Patient-Centered Medical/Health Home Initiative, and Accreditation and Patient-Centered Medical Home Initiative, PAL 2015-02.

## **II. ACCREDITATION AND PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME RECOGNITION INITIATIVE**

HRSA considers the PCMH care model foundational for the provision of high-quality primary health care within the Health Center Program and believes that the PCMH care model is crucial to improving health equity and addressing social determinants of health for its patient population. Numerous studies have documented the benefits of care delivered in the PCMH model to address chronic disease management, care coordination, improved communications, patient satisfaction, and lower operating costs for staffing<sup>1,2</sup>. To support accreditation and Patient-Centered medical home recognition HRSA provides resources through the Accreditation and Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative (APCMHI). Health centers with PCMH recognition are granted a 5-point funding priority if one or more sites has PCMH recognition at the time HRSA reviews Service Area Competition applications. All section 330 funded health centers and look-alike health centers are eligible to receive HRSA's accreditation and recognition resources/services through nationally recognized organizations under the APCMHI. To enroll in the APCMHI, health centers are required to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) as outlined in section III of this PAL. The table below provides the accreditation and recognition options supported by HRSA through the APCMHI. Health centers are eligible and encouraged to apply for both PCMH recognition and accreditation through the initiative. Health centers have three options for receiving accreditation and/or PCMH

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<sup>1</sup>Shi L, Lee DC, Chung M, Liang H, Lock D, Sripipatana A. (2017). Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition and Clinical Performance in U.S. Community Health Centers. *Health Serv Res*; 52(3):984-1004

<sup>2</sup>Nocon RS, Sharma R, Birnberg JM, Ngo-Metzer Q, Mee Lee S, Chin MH. (2013). Association Between Patient-Centered Medical Home Rating and Operating Cost at Federally Funded Health Centers. *JAMA*; 308(1):60-66.

recognition.

<b>TABLE 1</b>	NCQA	TJC	AAAHC
Accreditation	No	Yes	Yes
Accreditation Types	Not applicable	Ambulatory, Laboratory and Behavioral Health	Ambulatory
PCMH Recognition	Yes	Yes	Yes
Renewal	Every year	Every three years	Every three years

**Accreditation**

Health centers may select the organization (from Table 1 above) to obtain ambulatory health care accreditation under the APCMH 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 types 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 health centers, 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 may select the organization (from Table 1 above) to obtain PCMH recognition under the APCMH 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 with annual renewal.
- Based on the experience of health centers, the average amount of time needed to become recognized is 3 to 12 months following HRSA approval of a NOI.

**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. Details on the Notice of Intent process can be found [here](#).

**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 accreditation will need to provide the total number of sites currently in health center’s approved scope of project. Health centers seeking 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 Association’s [website](#)

#### **V. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please submit your Accreditation and/or Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) request to the [APCMH team](#).  To make sure you receive our reply email, add '[BPHCAAnswers@hrsa.gov](mailto:BPHCAAnswers@hrsa.gov)' to your address book.

[Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Health Care](#) 

Email: [HRSA@aaahc.org](mailto:HRSA@aaahc.org)

[The Joint Commission](#) 

TJC HRSA Accreditation and Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition Initiative

Email: [hrsaaccreditation@jointcommission.org](mailto:hrsaaccreditation@jointcommission.org) | Phone: 630-792-5900

[The National Committee for Quality Assurance](#) 

Email: [NCQA Government Recognition Initiative Program](#)  | Phone: 888-275-7585

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