

The New Standard: Navigating Joint Commission Changes in 2026 – Accreditation 360

As a reminder, Joint Commission is moving forward with the previously announced updates to its national accreditation standards to better align with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These adjustments to the accreditation manual for hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) are part of the “Accreditation 360: The New Standard” survey approach, which will go into effect January 1, 2026. The initiative will reinforce an ongoing shift toward continuous survey readiness and will include new resources designed to support hospitals in maintaining long-term compliance.



What Accreditation 360 Means for Hospitals and Healthcare Systems

Accreditation 360 will bring a stricter, yet more focused, approach to compliance, with fewer individual standards and greater emphasis on demonstrating real, sustained performance in core safety and quality areas. Organizations will see a significant reduction and reorganization of standards (about a 50% decrease, including the removal of 714 requirements for hospitals and 649 for CAHs), along with clearer separation between CoP-based requirements and “above-regulation” expectations, now consolidated into National Performance Goals (NPGs).

To meet these expectations, hospitals will need stronger cross-department collaboration, real-time tracking, and updated policies and training to prevent gaps during the transition. The shift also increases expectations around transparency and benchmarking, with a greater focus on continuous readiness rather than periodic compliance checks.

Additionally, Survey Process Guides (SPGs) will replace Survey Activity Guides to support more consistent interpretation and alignment between surveyors and healthcare organizations.

Key changes

- **Standards reduction & reorganization**
 - A roughly 50% reduction in total standards, including the consolidation of Environment of Care and Life Safety into a single Physical Environment chapter.
 - National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs) will be consolidated into the new National Performance Goals (NPGs) chapter (with the Medical Staff chapter excluded).
- **Stronger alignment with CMS CoP:** Each CoP-related Element of Performance will now clearly reference its corresponding CMS requirement.
- **Updated survey approach:** SPGs will be the authoritative guide for surveyors and accredited organizations
- **Increased transparency:** Joint Commission standards will be publicly searchable online, with crosswalks, disposition reports, revised manuals, SPGs, and comparison tools released in advance for review.

How Brightly Software can help

Hospitals and healthcare facilities must shift their compliance focus from low-value checklist items to measurable performance in core safety and quality outcomes. Success depends on stronger coordination between departments, real-time tracking, and consistent documentation and training to minimize compliance gaps.

Brightly Software's TheWorxHub already integrates Joint Commission codes into our CMMS by automatically attaching the codes to work orders and assets and seamlessly organizing your data by standard and substandard in our integrated digital binder. We will be releasing the new Accreditation 360 set of codes in the new year, enabling you to move to the new set of codes when you are ready.

Here are some of the benefits of TheWorxHub's powerful compliance capabilities:

→ Centralized & digitized compliance

- TheWorxHub's Compliance Pro module integrates permitting, documentation, and EP requirements directly into work orders, eliminating disconnected systems and paper binders. Digital Compliance Binders automatically organize historical and current records by accreditation standards.

→ Embedded permitting workflows

- Get built-in permitting (ICRA, ILSM/ALSM, PCRA) workflows within work orders, complete with tracking, approval, and audit trails.
- A central dashboard offers live status updates and standardized workflows to prevent permit-related delays or omissions.
- Create your own custom permits to align with your processes for things like hot work, above ceiling, etc.

→ Smart documentation & real-time readiness

- Dashboards, alerts, and reports highlight missing audit documentation before deficiencies are cited.
- Prioritize and track critical maintenance and compliance items linked to accreditation standards.

→ Enhanced accreditation 360 alignment

- Integrate compliance and performance tasks into daily operations, supporting continuous engagement and readiness across all facilities.

→ Improved operational efficiency & cost reduction

- Eliminate duplicative systems, manual tracking, and associated labor costs.
- Improve maintenance response times through direct permit-work order integration.
- Protect institutional knowledge with centralized, structured compliance records.

Brightly Software is designed to reduce the administrative burden and keep your institution ready for an audit at a moment's notice.

Discover how [Compliance Pro](#) can help you achieve compliance excellence in 2026.