Preparing for Your Survey

The following information, instructions, and suggestions will facilitate a productive and consultative site survey for your organization. If you have any questions regarding expectations, please contact your resource specialist at CARF. Thank you for your cooperation in the survey preparation process and your commitment to CARF accreditation.

___ The survey team coordinator (usually the administrative surveyor) contacts the survey key contact at the organization 2–3 weeks prior to the survey to develop a working agenda for the survey, identify who will be interviewed, discuss any questions the organization may have regarding the survey process, and address any logistical matters such as directions, transportation, arrival and departure times for surveyors, attire, etc.

___ If the survey key contact at the organization does not hear from the survey team coordinator by phone or email within two weeks prior to the survey, the organization should contact their designated resource specialist for assistance.

Document Review

___ The survey will cover every standard applicable to your organization and the programs/services for which accreditation is being sought. It is your organization’s responsibility to provide the documents and evidence necessary to demonstrate conformance to the standards. Corporate bylaws, financial records, etc., must be available during the survey.

___ Designate a room for the survey team to use to review documents and conduct team meetings. This should be a private room, as it may also be used for interviews. If the room does not have a telephone, please provide access to one for the team to use.

___ Ensure that documents necessary to demonstrate conformance to standards are available and accessible. For documents maintained in hard copy, assemble the necessary documents in the designated room. If you are unable to assemble certain documents in the designated room due to reasons of confidentiality, please prepare a list of such documents, noting where and how they may be accessed. For documents maintained electronically, provide surveyor access to the electronic files and records. In the presurvey call with the survey team coordinator, discuss the format in which documents will be available.

___ Some CARF survey preparation workbooks include documentation examples. If you are using an optional survey preparation workbook, these may be found under the “Documentation Examples” heading at the end of each section or in a table at the beginning of each section. In some standards manuals, the Documentation Examples are also listed at the end of each section.
If records of person served are maintained at various sites, ensure that these are available when the survey team arrives at the sites. The survey team coordinator will explain CARF’s policy of random record review and an estimation of how many records are likely to be reviewed. Please understand that during the course of the survey, team members may ask for additional records other than those identified the first day.

Organize the documents in such a way that the relationship between each document and the applicable standard(s) is clear to the survey team. If documents are in an electronic format, a key or guide to the documents and the relationship to the applicable standard(s) would be helpful.

Review each of the four Accreditation Conditions, located at the front of each standards manual in the “Accreditation Policies and Procedures” section, to ensure that you understand your organization’s responsibilities and are able to satisfy each of these conditions. Clarify with CARF before the survey if you have any questions.

**Orientation Conference**

Plan for and invite individuals whom you would like to attend the orientation conference, such as key organizational officials, staff members, persons served, representatives of the governance board, referral sources, and/or third-party funding sources. Let the survey team coordinator know during the presurvey call who will be attending.

Arrange an appropriate room where the orientation conference can be held. If any individuals will be calling in for the orientation conference, please make sure you have a working speaker phone set up.

Share with prospective attendees the purposes of the orientation conference; i.e., to outline the site visit process, to provide the survey team with an overview of the organization, and to answer questions.

**Facility(ies) Tour**

Plan for a brief tour of the physical plant(s). This usually occurs immediately following the orientation conference or shortly thereafter if individuals to be interviewed have time constraints. In the case of multiple sites, other arrangements may be preferable and not all survey team members will participate in the tour. You are encouraged to engage persons served to lead the tour, whenever possible.

**Interviews**

Arrange for persons served from each program/service being surveyed to be available to meet with a member of the survey team. The number of persons to be interviewed should be discussed with the survey team coordinator during the presurvey call. Please be aware that the surveyors may speak with additional persons served.
___ Arrange for representatives of major service purchasers, funding agencies, referral sources, and/or fiscal intermediaries to be available for interview. These interviews may be conducted by telephone or in person. The individuals to be interviewed should be discussed with the survey team coordinator during the presurvey call.

___ If your organization has a governance board, arrange for a representative (or two, if possible) to be available to meet with a member of the survey team.

___ If the standards in Section 1.B. Governance will be applied during the survey, arrange for representatives of the governance body and the chief executive officer to be available for interviews. These standards are required for Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Aging Services Networks and optional for other programs seeking accreditation.

___ Prepare management and other staff members to meet with a member of the survey team. However, please do not preschedule the staff interviews without consulting the surveyors. The survey team will work with your organization to schedule the interviews so as to minimize disruption of the organization’s operations. It is preferred, whenever possible, that interviews with staff members be conducted in their individual offices or another space that provides confidentiality.

___ Arrange for telephone interviews if in-person interviews are not possible.

___ Leadership should not participate in every interview. It is expected that the surveyors will have access to interviewees in a private area in which staff and persons served are open and comfortable in the sharing of information.

**Exit Conference**

___ Plan for and invite individuals whom you would like to attend the exit conference, such as administrative personnel, staff members, persons served, representatives of the governance board, referral sources, and/or third-party funding sources.

___ Share with prospective attendees the purpose of the exit conference; i.e., to summarize the survey team’s findings and provide an opportunity for interchange between the survey team and those in attendance.

___ Determine in advance whether you will record (audio or video) the exit conference and inform the survey team. Make prior technical arrangements.

**Other**

___ At least 30 days prior to the survey, download the poster announcing the pending survey and survey dates from www.carf.org/poster and display it in a place where it will be seen by persons served and other stakeholders. A poster should be displayed in all organization-owned sites. Note: For organizations seeking accreditation from CARF–CCAC, this poster may be downloaded from www.carf.org/ccacposter.
Utilize the consultative expertise of the survey team as you desire and as the team’s time allows. If there are particular areas in which you would like consultation, it is helpful to share this with the team coordinator in the presurvey call to assist in planning.

During the presurvey call with the team coordinator, discuss any arrangements for the survey team that would commit it to specific times during the day or evening. The survey team must have ultimate control over the use of its time and may not be able to honor commitments made without its approval.

The team coordinator may request that nonconfidential items be brought to the hotel the day before the survey begins. Although not required, providing nonconfidential materials to the team prior to the start of the onsite survey can help facilitate an efficient and consultative process. Examples of nonconfidential items could include policies, procedures, and plans; minutes of meetings; program descriptions; safety inspections; emergency plans and tests; performance analyses; model case records; an orientation packet, if any; a client handbook and activity schedule, if any; and directions to the organization. An organization may share some information in an electronic form. It is the organization’s option to use or share the survey preparation workbook with the team. It is also the option of the organization to provide any additional materials to the team prior to the scheduled start of the on-site survey. If the organization chooses not to provide these additional materials before the survey start, there is no negative consequence or impact on the accreditation decision.

Provide transportation as needed for the survey team from the hotel to the organization and to the multiple service/program sites. The organization is not expected to provide transportation from the airport to the hotel. The survey team does appreciate directions, maps, and restaurant suggestions to facilitate an efficient use of time.

Scheduling is an important item to discuss and arrange prior to the survey. Discuss this with the survey coordinator in the presurvey phone call. Please realize that time must be allowed for interviews, site visits and service delivery observation, and document review. All parties need to remain flexible.

If there are multiple sites involved in the survey, a sampling of sites may be visited. All sites should be prepared for the survey. The surveyors will inform you during or right after the orientation conference which sites they will visit.

If any questions or concerns arise during the preparation process or the survey, please call CARF to speak with your resource specialist for assistance.