

Dear colleague,

We want to contribute to your organization's success. CARF can help your organization meet the many challenges it faces in achieving quality outcomes for persons served while maintaining a healthy bottom line and ensuring long-term organizational survival. I would like to share with you the many benefits of accreditation — some of which you may know about and others that set CARF apart.

Well-known CARF accreditation benefits

- **Business improvement** – 98 percent of CARF's customers report accreditation helps improve their business.
- **Risk management** – Conformance to CARF standards helps organizations manage risk.
- **Funding access** – Accreditation can help secure reimbursement from regulators, funders, and payers and greater access to capital from lenders.
- **Positive visibility** – Accreditation is a public seal of trust and commitment to quality.
- **Accountability** – Accreditation helps demonstrate transparency and accountability to stakeholders.
- **Peer network** – CARF provides a link to a network of other leaders and service providers in your industry who face the same challenges. Many of these individuals present at CARF educational venues and contribute article to the CARF Connection, a free bimonthly newsletter (www.carf.org/subscribe), addressing many of the challenges and offering possible solutions.

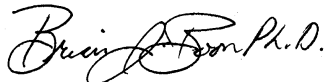
Additional offerings that distinguish CARF from all other accreditors and demonstrate the extended value of CARF and accreditation

- **Potential insurance premium savings** – Insurers consider CARF-accredited organizations a lower risk. To my knowledge, CARF is the only accreditor publicly recognized by insurers across all areas of accreditation. Because of this recognition, CARF-accredited organizations may receive a significant insurance premium discount.
- **E-learning for persons with disabilities and human service professionals** – Through an arrangement with EditU and SkillSoft®, CARF-accredited organizations can access Education for People With Disabilities in Information Technologies University, online state-of-the-art materials and curricula that help people with disabilities and professionals who serve them bridge the digital divide and enhance their computer skills.
- **Consumer reporting system** – CARF developed uSPEQ® to anonymously and confidentially gather consumer feedback on organizations' services and help improve organizational quality. This turnkey, cost-effective solution frees organizations from the burden of development, maintenance, and support and provides "independent" reporting from a credible third-party vendor.

For more information about these benefits of CARF accreditation, please call us toll free (888) 281-6531 or visit our website (www.carf.org).

Thank you for your commitment to quality services.

Regards,



Brian J. Boon, Ph.D.
President/CEO

Value of CARF Accreditation

Today, accreditation is more important than ever for human service programs.

In a market where persons served can make choices, how do you know they will choose you? More and more, persons served look for accredited organizations as a sign of quality before choosing a service. Accreditation assures persons served that an organization is committed to encouraging feedback, continuously improving services, and serving the community.

For a provider, accreditation demonstrates its commitment to enhance performance, manage risk, and distinguish itself from competing organizations.

When you decide to become accredited, choosing the right accrediting body is essential.

You need an accrediting body that is the best fit for your unique blend of services. You need an accrediting body that is internationally recognized for its independent, external peer review in the human services field. You need an accrediting body that will not only accredit your services, but will also add real value to your organization. You need CARF.

CARF has been a leading, independent, nonprofit accrediting body of human services since 1966. With guidance from the field, including providers; funders; and, most importantly, the persons served and their families, we develop standards that are focused on outcomes and the satisfaction of the persons served. And, with no hidden charges or surprise interpretations of standards, our accreditation process is transparent.

Perhaps you are wondering, “Is CARF accreditation worth the effort?” The answer is “Yes!”

True, it is not as simple as paying fees and receiving a certificate. A rigorous set of internationally recognized organization and program standards are applied during an on-site survey. We are not, however, a policing commission. We work with you to help you meet the standards. The survey is distinguished by our hallmark approach that is consultative peer review rather than inspective. Accountability and quality are the objectives, yet our approach allows your organization to incorporate the standards into practices to reflect your unique mission, vision, and identity as a human service provider.

CARF accreditation is more than a certificate on the wall. It is evidence that your organization strives to improve efficiency, fiscal health, and service delivery — creating a foundation for continuous quality improvement and consumer satisfaction. Insurers, third-party payers, and governmental regulators are likely to see CARF-accredited services as a better risk. Ultimately, our greatest value is assuring the persons you serve, and their families, that your services are focused on their unique needs.



Benefits of CARF Accreditation

CARF accreditation affords many benefits to an organization, consumers, payers, and regulators of services, including:

- Identification as an organization meeting internationally developed standards in the provision of quality services.
- Assurance to persons seeking services that a provider meets internationally accepted standards.
- Assurance to funding sources, referral agencies, payers, regulators, other providers, and the community of the quality of programs and services provided.
- Standards based on and integrating a quality framework for business and service delivery.
- Guidance for providing high quality services focused on the persons served that emphasize an integrated and individualized approach to services and outcomes.
- An independent, external review to identify strengths and areas for improvement based on objective program expectations and guidelines.
- Consultation and education focused on integration of business functions with service delivery.
- Guidance for responsible management that promotes active, dynamic planning focused on:
 - Positive outcomes for persons served and other stakeholders
 - The impact of strategies on persons served and key stakeholders
 - Organizational development of existing or new services to meet the needs and expectations of the community served
- Enhanced safety and risk management.
- Increased funding and reimbursement opportunities created by stronger relationships and partnership with purchasers and regulatory bodies.
- Practices that demonstrate:
 - Accountability
 - Positive outcomes
 - A person-centered and interdisciplinary approach to service delivery
 - Teamwork within the organization
 - Ongoing professional growth of personnel
 - Networking with other providers and resources
 - Comprehensive financial management

- An overall focus on service to the persons served
- Strategies and interventions based on the current accepted practices, evidence, and guidelines
- Techniques for designing and implementing organizational and financial systems that are efficient, cost-effective, and based on outcomes and satisfaction of the persons served and other stakeholders.
- Evidence of practice and performance that can be used in:
 - Marketing programs and services to consumers, referral sources, and third party funders
 - Seeking grants
 - Public Education
 - Advocacy activities
- Involvement of the persons served as active participants in planning, selecting, evaluating, and improving the services provided.
- Improved communication with persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders.
- Support from CARF through consultation, publications, conferences, training opportunities, and newsletters.
- Participation in insurance programs that offer discounted premiums to eligible providers.
- Access to free courses for persons served and personnel through EditU, a consortium of public and private partners that include CARF, SkillSoft®, the Association of Rehabilitation Programs in Computer Technology (ARPCT), the Educational Leadership, and the Research and Technology Department at Western Michigan University.

- From the CARF Accreditation Sourcebook © 2014



Benefits of CARF Accreditation

Accreditation affords many benefits to an organization, persons served, and other stakeholders, including:

The Benefits of Accreditation:	Consumer	Provider	Payer	Regulator
Identification as an organization meeting internationally developed standards in the provision of quality services.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Confidence on the part of persons seeking such services for themselves or family members.	✓	✓		
Confidence on the part of funding sources, referral agencies, other providers, businesses, community leaders, and community resource and service organizations.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guidance in the form of the CARF International standards for providing high quality services, implementing strategies for performance improvement, and developing specific policies and procedures in all areas, from the organizational structure to daily routines.		✓	✓	✓
Independent, external review to identify strengths and areas for improvement based on objective program expectations and guidelines that are common to all CARF-accredited organizations.	✓	✓	✓	✓
On-site education and consultation to help refocus business on the persons served and integrate business functions with service delivery.	✓	✓	✓	✓
An internal management tool promoting active, dynamic planning focused on positive outcomes for persons served and other stakeholders, the impact of strategies on these key groups, and organizational development of existing or new services to meet the needs and expectations of the community served.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased funding and reimbursement opportunities created by stronger relationships and partnerships with purchasers and regulatory bodies. Relationships are developed through the process of gaining input on program standards.		✓		
Participation in insurance programs that offer discounted premiums to eligible providers.		✓		

The Benefits of CARF Accreditation:	Consumer	Provider	Payer	Regulator
Practices that demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accountability - Positive outcomes - An interdisciplinary approach to service delivery - Teamwork within the organization - Ongoing professional growth of personnel - Networking with other providers and resources - Comprehensive financial management - An overall focus on service to the person served Evidence of practice can be used in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing services to consumers and referral sources - Seeking grants - Conducting fundraising events - Advocacy activities - Public education 		✓		
Ideas for management in designing and implementing organizational and financial systems that are well organized, cost efficient, effective, and based on outcomes and satisfaction of the persons served and other stakeholders.		✓		
Enhanced risk management, which may lead to reduced exposure and insurance premiums.	✓	✓		✓
Access to free courses for persons served and personnel through EditU, a consortium of public and private partners, including IBM [®] ; SkillSoft [®] ; the Association of Rehabilitation Programs in Computer Technology (ARPCT); the National Science Foundation; the Educational Leadership, Research and Technology Department at Western Michigan University; and CARF.	✓	✓		

Realizing a Return on Investment in Accreditation

Many provider organizations consider accreditation as a business strategy to support performance improvement. Anecdotally, they report many benefits of integrating CARF's field-driven standards into the culture of their organizations to continuously improve the quality of their services. Often named benefits of the organization's investment in accreditation include:

- peer review and consultation conducted by an independent, third-party accreditor;
- self-evaluation that discloses policies and procedures in need of improvement;
- increased satisfaction in the organization expressed by the persons served, leadership, and staff; and
- improved employee team communication and interaction.

Although these benefits are important to organizations, at times they are seen as not quantifiable and, thus, not a sufficient impetus to pursue accreditation. However, one company tracked its return on investment (ROI) in accreditation and discovered measurable and positive results of the accreditation experience.

One company's experience

The Senior Resource Group (SRG) is a network of accredited assisted living residences with 1,000 employees on 13 campuses throughout Oregon, California, and Arizona. The company serves 2,800 residents living in 2,000 units and offers a continuum of support to accommodate its residents' evolving needs — from independent and assisted living services to secured Alzheimer's/dementia care.

CARF asked SRG to measure its performance in key operational areas before pursuing accreditation and to measure them again after its campuses became accredited, taking into consideration any unusual or mitigating circumstances that could skew the data. Because SRG already had measurement systems and internal audit processes to provide reliable information to management, the company was able to easily make clear comparisons of its performance before and after accreditation.

SRG measured key indicators in the operational areas of personnel, marketing to potential residents, satisfaction, health and safety, facility and operational audits, insurance, financial performance, and information systems. The company reported that all of these areas realized positive impacts as a result of the accreditation experience. (See accompanying ROI for SRG highlights.)

Kayda Johnson, Chief Operating Officer of SRG, stated, "I think we were already performing at a high level, and we still saw improvement as a result of the survey process. I would think the ROI in accreditation might even be greater in other organizations."

Organizations that wish to measure their ROI in accreditation should review what areas they currently measure, such as personnel turnover, workers' compensation claims, customer and staff satisfaction, and various operational costs, so that they have a basis

for comparing data pre- and post-accreditation. Without reliable measurement systems in place before pursuing accreditation, organizations will find it nearly impossible to have an accurate basis of comparison to determine the true ROI in accreditation.

Improvement must be sustained over time

Although SRG saw improvements by preparing for accreditation, the key for it and other organizations to sustain improvement over time is to continually apply the standards, even when an accreditation survey is not about to occur. From Ms. Johnson's perspective, the real value of accreditation is that SRG "continues to use the standards in all areas of our organization. We are always looking for ways to improve, so we have integrated the standards into the way we work in our organization. Even if we are not evaluating ourselves in preparation for an accreditation survey, we are still referring to the standards and using them daily. By doing so, in combination with measuring our performance, we will continue to see a return on our investment in accreditation."

An added benefit, Ms. Johnson noted, is that the accreditation process gave employees a "better understanding of how all the metrics tie together. We are pleased with the overall results of accreditation for our entire portfolio. Since accreditation was new to our organization, a pleasant surprise was the overwhelming pride that everyone exhibited before, during, and after the surveys. We are proud because all of our campuses have been accredited."

CARF will continue to measure the ROI of accreditation with aging services providers in the accreditation process in this and coming years. For more information about the ROI study, please contact CARF toll free at (888) 281-6531.

Susanne Matthiesen, M.B.A., and **Kayda Johnson** collaborated in preparing this article. Ms. Matthiesen is a Business Development Executive of CARF International in Washington, D.C., and Ms. Johnson is the chief operating officer of Senior Resource Group, based in San Diego. Ms. Johnson is the chief operating officer of Senior Resource Group, based in San Diego. Ms. Johnson is the chief operating officer of Senior Resource Group, based in San Diego.

Reproduced from *CARF Connection* newsletter, May-June 2005

A condensed version of this article appeared in *FutureAge* magazine,
a former publication of [LeadingAge](#).

ROI for SRG

Here are highlights of the positive impacts that the Senior Resource Group (SRG) tracked as a result of accreditation:

Personnel

- Employee turnover decreased 7 percent.
- Workers' compensation claims decreased by 7 percent as a percentage of the employee base.

Marketing to potential residents

- 1,450 more leads were received.
- 1,118 more tours were requested.

Satisfaction

- Employee and resident satisfaction scores were maintained at a level greater than 4.0 (out of a possible maximum of 5.0), despite opening 3 large communities with more than 500 new residents and approximately the same number of new hires.

Resident health and safety

- Resident falls decreased by 2 percent.
- Psychotropic drug administration was halved for residents.
- Medication administration errors decreased by approximately 34 percent.
- Elopements decreased by approximately 15 percent, even with the opening of two new communities.
- State health survey deficiencies decreased by 40 percent.

Facility and operational audits

- Individual sites' performance on internal, unannounced facility audits to review the physical plant exceeded the SRG target by approximately 3 percent after accreditation.

Financial performance

- Cost of vehicular maintenance decreased by \$831 per campus, despite the addition of 10 vehicles.
- Cost of facility supplies decreased on average by approximately \$2,700 per campus.

Information systems

- After implementing CARF–CCAC's performance measurement and information management standards, SRG's database for tracking and trending was strengthened in its reliability and validity and was further enhanced so that management feels more confident in basing decisions on this information.

A recent study supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality examined the association of CARF accreditation and improved rehabilitative care in nursing homes. The research found that:

- Approaches beyond traditional regulation and governmental inspections are necessary to improve the quality of care in nursing homes.
- Voluntary accreditation improves the quality of care in short-stay residents residing in CARF-accredited facilities.
- CARF-accredited nursing homes are better performers in minimizing iatrogenic effects, which can ultimately result in better outcomes of care.

Find out more about this study by visiting the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\) summary webpage](#).