



The Joint Commission

Sustainable Healthcare Certification

Review Process Guide

2025

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What's New in 2025

New or revised content for 2025 is identified by underlined text in the activities noted below.

Changes effective January 1, 2025

No changes for January 2025.

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Sustainable Healthcare Certification Review Process Introduction

This guide is intended to prepare your organization for a review of compliance with the Sustainable Healthcare certification standards. It is important that you read this guide and follow the instructions, as well as access the recommended resources so that your organization is prepared for participating in the certification review process. In this activity guide your organization will find guidance on how to prepare for a Sustainable Healthcare certification review.

The Joint Commission offers two certification options for organizations:

1. Single healthcare organization (HCO) certification – the certification is awarded to one organization or
2. Corporate centralized system – certification is awarded to the corporate entity.

The *Certification Review Process Guide* describes each activity of a Joint Commission certification review. Organizations should become familiar with the review activities which include:

- The purpose of the activity.
- Descriptions of what will happen during the activity.
- Suggested amount of time for the activity
- Discussion topics, when applicable.
- Recommended participants.
- Materials to have available for the activity if required.

These activity descriptions can be shared organization-wide as appropriate.

Introductory Phone Call

A Joint Commission Account Executive will be in touch with your organization by phone soon after your application is received. The purpose of this call is to:

- Conduct initial introductions.
- Confirm information reported in your application for certification.
- Confirm computer hardware and internet connectivity (recommend hardwire internet connection).
- Confirm your hours of operation; if these change at any time, please call and inform your Account Executive.
- Confirm your mailing address, internet website address, if applicable.
- Confirm that your organization knows how to access your secure Joint Commission *Connect* extranet site to view communications and certification-related information.
- Answer any of your questions.

Certification Review Notification and Postponement Policies

Notice of Initial Certification Review

If this is your program's first time through the certification process, you will receive a thirty (30) day advance notice of your review date(s). Notice will be provided via e-mail to the individuals identified on your account as the Primary Certification Contact and CEO. Also, thirty (30) days prior to your review, the Notification of Scheduled Events section on your organization's extranet site, The *Joint Commission Connect*, is populated with the event along with a link to the reviewer(s) name, biographical sketch, and photograph.

Notice of Re-Certification Review

Your organization will receive notice from The Joint Commission seven (7) business days prior to the first day of the scheduled review date(s) for Sustainable Healthcare re-certification. The notice will be emailed to the individuals identified on your account as the Primary Certification Contact and CEO and will include the specific review date(s) and the program(s) being reviewed. Additionally, The *Joint Commission Connect*, will be populated with the review event including a link to the reviewer(s) name, biographical sketch, and photograph once the reviewer has arrived onsite or the reviewer has started the virtual review.

Review Postponement Policy

The Joint Commission may not certify a program if the organization does not allow The Joint Commission to conduct a review. In rare circumstances, it may be appropriate to request a review postponement. An organization should direct a request for postponement to its Account Executive. A request to postpone a review may be granted if a major, unforeseen event has occurred that has totally or substantially disrupted operations, such as the following:

- A natural disaster or major disruption of service due to a facility failure
- The organization's involvement in an employment strike

The Joint Commission may, at its discretion, approve a request to postpone a review for an organization not meeting any of the criteria listed above.

Your organization's Certification Account Executive can answer questions about these policies or put you in contact with other Joint Commission staff that can assist you.

Sustainable Healthcare Certification **Opening Conference**

Duration

Approximately 30 minutes

Overview of Activities

The Opening Conference will include the following:

- Introduction of reviewer.
- Introductions of organization review coordinator and leaders.
- Reviewers will provide:
 - A brief overview of The Joint Commission and Certification if this is an initial review; if this is a re-certification review, the discussion will focus on any changes or updates to the Certification process since the last review.
 - Agenda review with discussion of any needed changes.
 - Brief overview or refresher on the SAFER™ portion of the Summary of Certification Review Findings Report.
 - Answer any questions about the review process.
- Confirm that requested documentation will be available for the Reviewer Planning Session.
- Learn about the organization's structure, operations, and scope of the environmental sustainability program.
- Review and discuss information provided by the organization in their certification application and any changes since the application was submitted.

Sustainable Healthcare Certification **Reviewer Planning Session**

Duration

Approximately 60 minutes

Organization Participants

Review coordinator and/or individual(s) familiar with the organization's environmental sustainability program

Reviewer Planning

The organization must have the following information available on the first day of the review. The reviewer will examine the following:

- Organization chart
- Written strategic plan and/or meeting minutes that capture discussion of environmental sustainability as one of organization's strategic initiatives.
- Environmental sustainability operational plan
- Data for three of the six emission sources identified by the organization (for initial review)
 - Energy use (fuel combustion)
 - Purchased electricity (purchased grid electricity, district steam, chilled and hot water)
 - Anesthetic gas use, including volatile agents and nitrous oxide
 - Pressurized metered-dose inhaler use
 - Fleet vehicle carbon-based fuel use (from organization owned vehicles)
 - Waste disposal
- 24 months of data for three emissions (for recertification)

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Orientation to the Organization's Environmental Sustainability Program

The Orientation session is an opportunity for the organization to describe their environmental sustainability program scope, structure, and decarbonization activities. The session allows the reviewer to learn about the organization's processes for communication and coordination of greenhouse gas reduction activities.

Duration

Approximately 60-minutes

Organization Participants

- Senior leader(s)/leader(s) of the organization
- Individual(s) responsible for oversight of the environmental sustainability program
- Others at the discretion of organization leaders

Overview

The reviewer will discuss and explore the following topics with participants:

- The organization's strategic planning process
- Resource allocation for decarbonization activities
- Operational plan development and implementation (SHCLD.02, EP2; SHCPI.01, EP1)
- The organization's decarbonization journey
- Key structures and processes to improve energy efficiency, decrease waste, and decreasing carbon footprint (SHCLD.01, EP2; SHCLD.02, EP1)
- Communication and coordination activities
- Decarbonization goals (SHCPI.01, EP1)

For organizations that elect the multi-HCO integrated/centralized system, additional topics the reviewer will discuss and explore include:

- Responsibilities and accountabilities of the corporate entity and the individual healthcare organizations identified to be included for the certification (SHCLD.02)
- Priority setting for decarbonization by the corporate entity and communication to the individual healthcare organizations (HCO) (SHCLD.02)
- Data and information flows between the corporate entity and the individual healthcare organizations (SHCPI.01)
- Determination of individual healthcare organizations to be sampled.

The breadth and depth of discussion on each topic may vary. If a topic is better explained through demonstration or a review of data and documents, indicate this to the reviewer.

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Measurement of Greenhouse Gases

The Measurement of Greenhouse Gases session is an opportunity for the reviewer to evaluate the organization's methods to measure greenhouse gases.

Duration

Approximately 90-minutes

Organization Participants

- Individual(s) responsible for oversight of the of the environmental sustainability program
- Individual(s) with knowledge and experience in measuring greenhouses gases and converting data into MTCO_{2e}
- Others at the discretion of organization leaders

Overview

The reviewer will discuss and review the following with participants:

- Greenhouse gas sources being measured (at least 3) (SHCME.01, EP1)
- Determination of baseline year
- Data gathering approach (centralized or decentralized) (SHCME.01, EP 1)
- Activity data collection and emissions factors (SHCME.01, EP 1)
- Application of calculation tools (SHCME.01, EP 1)
- Converting activity data into MTCO_{2e} (SHCME.01, EP 2)

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Performance Improvement

The Performance Improvement session is an opportunity for the reviewer to learn how the organization has improved its environmental footprint and assess whether greenhouse gas emissions are met in the three areas identified.

Duration

Approximately 60-minutes

Organization Participants

- Individual(s) responsible for oversight of the of the environmental sustainability program
- Individual(s) with knowledge and experience in measuring greenhouses gases and converting data into MTCO₂e
- Performance improvement staff, if there is data and information sharing
- Others at the discretion of organization leaders

Overview

The reviewer will discuss and review the following with participants:

- Approach to performance improvement
- Data collection process (see SHCME.01)
- Data quality
- Annual assessment of data to determine actions meet goals (SHCPI.01, EP2)
- Revision of plan if goals are not achieved or maintained (SHCPI.01, EP 3)
- Reporting to leadership

Sustainable Healthcare Certification **Summary Discussion**

This time will be utilized for a final discussion prior to the reviewer's report preparation and the exit conference. The reviewer will work with the organization's certification contact/review coordinator to organize and conduct the summary discussion.

Duration

Approximately 30-minutes

Organization Participants

Review coordinator and/or individual(s) familiar with the organization's environmental sustainability program

Other participants will vary depending upon the identified follow-up required.

Materials Needed for this Activity

Will vary depending upon the follow-up required.

Summary Discussion Description

Topics that may be addressed include:

- Any issues not yet resolved
- The identified Requirements for Improvement (RFIs)
- Sharing best practices to inspire quality improvement and outcomes
- Determination if RFIs will be discussed in detail at Exit Conference

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Reviewer Report Preparation

The reviewer uses this time to compile, analyze and organize the data they have collected throughout the review into a preliminary report reflecting the organization's compliance with standards.

Duration

Approximately 60-minutes

Organization Participants

None required, unless specifically requested by the reviewer

Reviewer Report Preparation Description

The reviewer uses this time to analyze their observations and determine if there are any findings that reflect standards compliance issues. If organization interruptions can be kept to a minimum during this time, it will help the reviewer remain on schedule and deliver a report at the appointed time. The reviewer will be using their laptop computer to prepare the preliminary report and plan for the Exit Conference.

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Exit Conference

The Exit Conference is the final activity when the organization receives a preliminary report of findings from the reviewer. In addition, the reviewer will:

- Present the Summary of Certification Review Findings report, including the SAFER™ matrix feature if desired, as determined during the Summary Discussion session.
- Discuss any standards compliance issues that resulted in Requirements for Improvement (RFIs).
- Identify organization best practices.
- Allow the organization a final opportunity to question the review findings and provide additional material regarding standards' compliance.
- Explain the post-review process and required follow-up actions, as applicable.

Duration

- Approximately 30-minutes

Organization Participants

- Organization leaders
- Other staff at the discretion of the organization

Materials Needed for this Activity

Copies of the certification report—if it is being distributed to staff

Exit Conference Description

This is a 30-minute activity that takes place at the completion of a review. Administrative and individual(s) responsible for the environmental sustainability program, clinical leaders (based on greenhouse gas reduction activities), and other organization staff, as invited, will hear a verbal report of review findings, requirements for improvement, and where these are appearing on the SAFER™ matrix. The preliminary certification review findings and printed report are shared with participants in the Exit Conference ONLY with the permission of the CEO. All reports left onsite are preliminary and subject to change upon review by Joint Commission central office staff.

Sample Review Agenda

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One Reviewer for One Day

Note: For organizations that elect the corporate centralized system review, the number of review days and activity times will be expanded based on the number of healthcare organizations to be sampled.

Time	Activity & Topics	Organization Participants
8:00 – 8:30 a.m.	Opening Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Joint Commission and Certification overview • Agenda review 	Certification review coordinator Leader(s) Others at the discretion of the organization
8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Reviewer Planning Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structure (SHCLD.02, EP1) • Written strategic plan (SHC.LD.01, EP1) • Review baseline data for three emission sources (for initial review) • Review 24 months of data for three emissions (for recertification) 	Certification review coordinator (at the reviewer’s request)
9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Orientation to the Organization’s Environmental Sustainability Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization’s decarbonization journey • Key structures and processes to improve energy efficiency, decrease waste, and decreasing carbon footprint (SHCLD.01, EP2; SHCLD.02, EP1) • Coordination activities • Operational plan development and implementation (SHCLD.02, EP2; SHCPI.01, EP1) • Decarbonization goals (SHCPI.01, EP1) 	Senior leaders(s) and individual(s) responsible for oversight of the environmental sustainability program
10:30 – 12:00 p.m.	Measurement of Greenhouse Gases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gas sources being measured (at least 3) (SHCME.01, EP1) • Data gathering approach (centralized or decentralized) (SHCME.01, EP 1) 	Individual(s) with knowledge and experience in measuring GHG and converting data into MTCO2e

Time	Activity & Topics	Organization Participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity data collection and emissions factors (SHCME.01, EP 1) • Application of calculation tools (SHCME.01, EP 1) • Converting activity data into MTCO_{2e} (SHCME.01, EP 2) 	
12:00 – 12:30 p.m.	Reviewer Lunch	
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Performance Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to PI • Data collection process (see SHCME.01) • Data quality • Annual assessment of data to determine actions meet goals (SHCPI.01, EP2) • Revision of plan if goals are not achieved or maintained (SHCPI.01, EP 3) • Reporting to leadership 	Individual(s) with knowledge and experience in measuring GHG and converting data into MTCO _{2e}
1:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Summary Discussion	Certification review coordinator Individual(s) responsible for environmental sustainability program
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Reviewer Report Preparation	None
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	Organization Exit Conference	Organization leadership Others at the discretion of the organization

Note: This agenda is a guide and may be modified based on organizational need and reviewer discretion.