

Access to Care and Continuity of Care (ACC)

Overview

Health care organizations are pursuing a more comprehensive and integrated approach toward delivering health care. This approach is characterized by a high degree of collaboration and communication among health care practitioners. Hospitals need to consider the care provided as part of an integrated provider system of services, health care practitioners, and levels of care, which make up a continuum of care. The goal is to correctly match the patient's health care needs with the services available, to coordinate timely and high-quality services provided to the patient in the organization, and then to plan for referral, transfer, or discharge and follow-up. The result is improved patient care outcomes and more efficient use of available resources.

Information is essential for making correct decisions about the following:

- Which patient needs can be met by the health care organization
- Prioritization for patients presenting with urgent or immediate needs
- Efficient flow of services to the patient
- Access to intensive care or specialized services
- Coordination and continuity of care
- Referral, transfer, or discharge of the patient to their home or to another care setting
- Safe patient transportation

Standards

The following is a list of all standards for this function. They are presented here for your convenience without their intent statements or measurable elements. For more information about these standards, please see the next section in this chapter, Standards, Intents, and Measurable Elements.

Admission to the Hospital

- ACC.01.00** Patients admitted to the hospital or who seek outpatient services are screened to identify if their health care needs match the hospital's mission, scope of care, and resources.
- ACC.01.01** Patients with emergent, urgent, or immediate needs are given priority for assessment and treatment.
- ACC.01.02** The hospital considers the clinical needs of patients and informs patients when there are unusual delays for diagnostic and/or treatment services.

Patient Flow

- ACC.02.00** The hospital has a process for managing the flow of patients throughout the hospital that includes the admission and registration of patients, as applicable to the patient care setting.
- ACC.02.01** At the time of admission, the patient and family receive education and orientation to the patient care area, information on the proposed care and any expected costs for care, and the expected outcomes of care.

ACC.02.02 The hospital establishes criteria for admission to and discharge from units or departments providing specialized services.

Continuity of Care

ACC.03.00 The hospital provides continuous patient care services and coordination among health care providers.

ACC.03.01 There is a qualified individual responsible for the patient's care.

Discharge, Referral, and Follow-Up

ACC.04.00 The hospital develops and implements a discharge planning and referral process based on the patient's readiness for discharge.

ACC.04.01 The hospital's discharge process includes patient and family education related to the patient's ongoing need for continuing care, treatment, and services.

ACC.04.02 The complete discharge summary is prepared for all patients and is included in the patient's medical record.

ACC.04.03 Emergency care is documented.

ACC.04.04 Medical records contain patient profiles.

ACC.04.05 The hospital has a process for the management of patients who leave against medical advice.

Transfer of Patients

ACC.05.00 The hospital has a process to transfer patients to other health care organizations based on the patient's status and the hospital's ability to meet those needs.

ACC.05.01 The receiving organization is given a written summary of the patient's clinical condition and the interventions provided by the hospital, and the process is documented in the patient's medical record.

Transportation

ACC.06.00 The hospital's transportation services comply with relevant laws and regulations and meet requirements for high-quality, safe transport.

Standards, Intents, and Measurable Elements

Admission to the Hospital

Standard ACC.01.00

Patients admitted to the hospital or who seek outpatient services are screened to identify if their health care needs match the hospital's mission, scope of care, and resources.

Intent of ACC.01.00

Matching patient needs with the hospital's mission, scope of care, and available resources depends on obtaining information on the patient's needs and condition through screening. Decisions to treat, to transfer, or to refer are made only after the results of screening evaluations are available.

Screening for patient needs and condition may be conducted through various means, including the following:

- Triage criteria in the emergency department or outpatient urgent/immediate care clinic
- Visual evaluation