

BE PREPARED FOR THE 2006 NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY GOALS *by Dave Gourley RRT*



The Joint Commission released the National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs) for this year in mid-2005. As has been the practice for the past several years, the JCAHO reviews the current NPSGs, and decisions are made to "retire" goals that were previously in place, continue goals for the upcoming year, and add new goals for healthcare organizations to implement. This process is overseen by an expert panel of patient safety experts, in addition to physicians, nurses, pharmacists, risk managers, and other healthcare professionals with experience in patient safety initiatives. The Sentinel Event Advisory Group, in

conjunction with JCAHO staff, reviews current literature and databases to identify potential new goals. The Advisory Group reviews input from a variety of sources to determine the patient safety priorities. The first NPSGs were approved in July 2002 and became effective in January 2003. Goals specific to individual programs (Hospital, home care, ambulatory care, etc.) were developed in 2004, with implementation beginning in 2005. The purpose of the NPSGs are to focus healthcare organizations on specific areas of concern in regards to patient safety.

Healthcare organizations are required to implement recommendations of the NPSGs or submit an alternate approach to JCAHO for acceptance by the Sentinel Event Advisory Group. The alternate approach proposed by an organization must be at least as effective in achieving the goals as the published requirements. Organizations that wish to submit an alternative approach to the NPSGs can do so by filling out a "Request for Review of an Alternative Approach to a NPSG Requirement" form. The form and instructions for submitting it are available on the Joint Commission website, www.JCAHO.org. A new requirement, introduced in February 2006, is that for each alternative request, the organization must submit a comprehensive literature search to identify support for the proposed alternative process and any risks and barriers to implementation, which must be addressed in the organization's description of its proposed alternative process. Members of the Sentinel Event Advisory Group will review the submission and notify the organization if the alternative has been accepted or not. If not accepted, the Group will provide the rationale for not accepting. The organization may revise the alternative and resubmit, or implement the requirement as issued.

The NPSGs for 2006 are too extensive to print here, but can be found at www.jcaho.org

All healthcare organizations must focus on these goals and integrate them into daily practice. The JCAHO surveyors will be assessing compliance with the NPSGs and they are scored as an Element of Performance in the NPSGs Chapter of the standards manual. The healthcare organization's compliance with these requirements is being publicly disclosed in the Quality Reports on the JCAHO website. For further information regarding the National Patient Safety Goals, visit the JCAHO website at www.JCAHO.org, or the Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety website at www.jcipatientsafety.org.



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