

How to Choose the Right Accrediting Body for Your Home Care Agency

A comparison of ACHC, CHAP, Joint Commission, and HQAA to help you make the right choice

thebizofseniorcare.com

Introduction: Why Accreditation Matters

Accreditation is one of the most important decisions you will make as a home care agency owner. While not always legally required, accreditation provides your agency with Medicare deemed status — meaning your agency is deemed to meet Medicare's Conditions of Participation without requiring a separate state survey for Medicare certification. This can save you months of time and significantly streamline your path to accepting Medicare patients.

Beyond Medicare deemed status, accreditation signals credibility and quality to referral sources, patients, and their families. Many Medicaid waiver programs and managed care organizations require or prefer accredited providers. Accreditation also serves as a powerful marketing advantage, differentiating your agency from competitors who lack this credential. Choosing the right accrediting body depends on your agency type, budget, timeline, and strategic goals.

Overview of the Four Major Accrediting Bodies

EST. 1986

ACHC

Accreditation Commission for Health Care

Focus: Home health, hospice, private duty nursing

Cost: \$3,500 – \$6,000

Timeline: 3 – 6 months

Medicare Deemed Status: Yes

Known for personalized customer service and an education-focused approach to the accreditation process. ACHC works closely with agencies to help them understand and

EST. 1965

CHAP

Community Health Accreditation Partner

Focus: Community-based home health and hospice care

Cost: \$3,000 – \$5,500

Timeline: 3 – 6 months

Medicare Deemed Status: Yes

The oldest accrediting body focused specifically on home and community-based healthcare. CHAP has deep expertise in home health and hospice operations and is widely recognized by state regulatory agencies.

meet standards, making it a popular choice for first-time agency owners.

EST. 1951

Joint Commission

The Joint Commission

Focus: All healthcare settings (hospitals, home health, behavioral health)

Cost: \$5,000 – \$12,000

Timeline: 4 – 9 months

Medicare Deemed Status: Yes

The most recognized name in healthcare accreditation. Joint Commission accreditation carries significant brand prestige and is widely recognized by hospitals, physicians, and insurance companies. However, it comes with higher costs and a more rigorous process.

EST. 1996

HQAA

Healthcare Quality Association on Accreditation

Focus: DMEPOS and home health services

Cost: \$2,500 – \$5,000

Timeline: 2 – 4 months

Medicare Deemed Status: Partial (DMEPOS focus)

Offers the fastest turnaround time and lowest cost among major accrediting bodies. HQAA is particularly popular among DMEPOS suppliers but also offers accreditation for home health services. Best for agencies that need accreditation quickly and on a budget.

Detailed Feature Comparison

FEATURE	ACHC	CHAP	JOINT COMMISSION	HQAA
Cost Range	\$3,500 – \$6,000	\$3,000 – \$5,500	\$5,000 – \$12,000	\$2,500 – \$5,000
Timeline	3 – 6 months	3 – 6 months	4 – 9 months	2 – 4 months
Medicare Deemed Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial (DMEPOS)
Survey Cycle	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	Every 3 years
Focus Area	Home health, hospice, private duty	Community-based home health, hospice	All healthcare settings	DMEPOS, home health
Accreditation Length	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years
Education Resources	Extensive (webinars, guides, consultants)	Strong (workshops, online tools)	Comprehensive (standards manuals, e-learning)	Basic (guides, phone support)
Customer Service Reputation	Excellent — highly personalized	Very good — responsive and supportive	Good — large organization, less personal	Good — fast and efficient

Decision Framework

Choose ACHC if:

You want a balance of cost, support, and recognition. ACHC is ideal for agencies that value a hands-on, education-focused accreditation partner that will guide you through the process. ACHC has strong recognition among home health and hospice agencies and is often recommended by industry consultants.

Choose CHAP if:

You are a community-based home health or hospice agency looking for an accreditor with deep roots in home and community-based care. CHAP is the oldest accrediting body in this space and has established relationships with state regulatory agencies across the country. Their standards are specifically designed for community-based providers.

Choose Joint Commission if:

Brand prestige matters most to your agency and your budget allows for the higher cost. Joint Commission accreditation is the most widely recognized credential in healthcare. If you plan to pursue contracts with hospitals, large physician groups, or managed care organizations, Joint Commission accreditation can open doors that other accreditations may not.

Choose HQAA if:

You need fast accreditation on a budget, particularly if your agency focuses on DMEPOS services. HQAA offers the shortest timeline and the lowest cost among the four major accrediting bodies. While their Medicare deemed status is primarily focused on DMEPOS, they are an excellent choice for agencies that need to get accredited quickly.