

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.

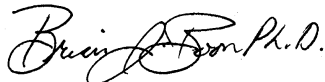
Additional offerings that distinguish CARF from all other accreditors and demonstrate the extended value of CARF and accreditation

- **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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian J. Boon, Ph.D.".

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

What is Accreditation?

When a program or service is CARF-accredited, it means your organization has passed an in-depth review and meets rigorous CARF guidelines for service and quality—a qualified endorsement that it conforms to internationally recognized service standards and is focused on delivering the most favorable results for persons it serves. The human service field, including all stakeholders, develops the standards that are applied on CARF surveys.

Distinctions between certification and accreditation

Certification

- Awarded to a person
- Based on knowledge and instruction
- Involves continuing education
- Affects professional status of the individual

Accreditation

- Awarded to an organization
- Based on service results and standards conformance
- Involves quality improvement mechanisms

Why choose CARF?

CARF accreditation is a seal of approval announcing to persons served and their families that you provide services focused on their needs. It is a sign of assurance to third-party payors and governmental regulators that you have met internationally recognized standards, and it is a tool for quality improvement within your organization.

The value of accreditation is more than a certificate hanging on the wall. It is evidence that your organization strives to improve efficiency, fiscal health, and service delivery—creating a foundation for consumer satisfaction.

Organizations that have participated in an accreditation survey demonstrate:

- A higher degree of internal quality.
- Greater involvement of persons served in their services.
- Increased cohesion among staff members at all levels within the organization.
- Enhanced status of the surveyed services within the community.

When your organization is accredited, the public is assured that you are committed to continually improving the quality of your services and that your organization's focus is on service outcomes and customer satisfaction.



About CARF

Founded in 1966, CARF is an international, independent, nonprofit accreditor of human service providers and networks. The CARF group of companies includes CARF International, CARF Canada, and CARF Europe, and assist service providers in improving the quality of their services, demonstrating value, and meeting internationally recognized organizational and program standards.

CARF's mission

CARF's mission is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of persons served.

Accreditation areas

A provider earns accreditation by demonstrating conformance to CARF's internationally recognized standards. CARF accredits providers for specific programs and services, and many providers seek CARF accreditation in more than one area. CARF publishes standards manuals in the following accreditation areas:

- Aging Services
- Behavioral Health
- Business and Services Management Network
- CARF-CCAC
- Child and Youth Services
- Employment and Community Services
- Medical Rehabilitation
- One-Stop Career Center
- Opioid Treatment Program
- Vision Rehabilitation Services

enhancing
PEOPLE'S LIVES

Contact CARF

We welcome your comments and inquiries.

CARF International

Tucson, AZ USA
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CARF Canada

Edmonton, AB Canada
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CARF Europe

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Opioid Treatment Program

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Child and Youth Services

cys@carf.org

Employment and Community Services

ecs@carf.org

Medical Rehabilitation

medical@carf.org

Our Services

Our products and services can help improve your organization and enhance the lives of the persons you serve.

What services does CARF provide?

Accreditation

- **ON-SITE SURVEY**

The survey process is rooted in peer review, networking, and improvement of business practices and organizational quality.

The on-site survey team of professional peers provides an impartial, external review of your organization's conformance to the accreditation standards and can provide confirmation of what you are doing well. Survey team members also offer consultation for ongoing quality improvement.

- **SURVEY REPORT**

After the survey, we prepare a report highlighting your organization's strengths and areas for improvement, based on your organization's level of conformance to the standards.

- **ANNUAL CONFORMANCE TO QUALITY REPORT**

A CARF-accredited provider participates in an annual review of its practices. The leadership of your organization sends a signed commitment to CARF stating that it is using CARF standards to guide the organization. Accreditation is a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

- **TERM OF AN ACCREDITATION**

The accreditation award is based on your organization's demonstration of its conformance to the standards. The CARF accreditation term may be for three years or one year. Depending on fulfillment of annual requirements, the CARF-CCAC accreditation term may extend to five years.

Consultation

CARF helps your organization improve its service quality, demonstrate value, and meet internationally recognized organization and program standards.

A hallmark of our on-site surveys is an approach that is consultative rather than inspective. Surveyors are peers in the field who have experience in the programs and services that we accredit and typically have a direct link to organizations that have achieved accreditation. Surveyors receive extensive training and are matched to organizations they survey based on the organizations' characteristics and program types.

In addition, consultation with CARF staff members is personalized and prompt. They will be glad to answer your questions about interpreting and implementing the standards. CARF does not charge a fee to answer your questions and tries to respond to them by the next business day.

Our Services

Publications

The CARF family of organizations publishes standards manuals that correspond to the fields served by the areas eligible for accreditation. Individuals in those fields develop the standards with the input of persons served, professionals, purchasers, service providers, and other interested parties. The standards manuals are updated annually or as necessary to ensure that they reflect current, practical, and relevant quality standards.

We also offer many other publications to help your organization's efforts in providing programs and services focused on quality.

Education

Seminars and conferences are an excellent way for your organization to receive information about the application of the accreditation standards, the survey process, and our policies and procedures. If your organization is preparing for a survey for the first time, it is helpful to send key staff members to an educational event offered in cities throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. For current training information, please visit our website at www.carf.org and click on Events.

Get Started

What are the steps to accreditation?

(If your organization is applying for a CARF survey, please review the complete steps to accreditation published in the standards manuals.)

The steps to accreditation involve a year or more of preparation before the site survey and ongoing quality improvement following the survey.

1. Consult with a designated CARF resource specialist to provide guidance and technical assistance regarding the accreditation process.

2. Conduct a self-evaluation. The organization must implement and use the standards for at least six months before the survey.

3. Submit the survey or redevelop and nonrefundable or redevelop fee. The organization must provide information about leadership, programs, and services that the organization is providing and the service delivery location(s).

4. CARF invoices for the survey fee. The CARF fee is based on the number of surveyors and days needed to complete the survey. The CARF-CCAC fee is fixed, with additional fees if additional programs are added to the survey.

5. CARF selects the survey team. Surveyors are selected by matching their program or administrative expertise and relevant field experience with the organization's unique requirements.

6. The survey team conducts the survey and determines the organization's conformance to all applicable standards on site by observing services, interviewing persons served and other stakeholders, and reviewing documentation. Surveyors also provide consultation to organization personnel.

7. CARF renders an accreditation outcome. CARF reviews the survey findings and renders one of the following accreditation decisions:

CARF

Three-year Accreditation
One-year Accreditation
Provisional Accreditation
Nonaccreditation

CARF-CCAC

Five-year Term of Accreditation
Nonaccreditation

Approximately six to eight weeks after the survey, CARF notifies the organization of the accreditation outcome and sends it a written survey report and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

8. Submit a QIP. Within 90 days after notification of the accreditation outcome, the organization fulfills an accreditation condition by submitting to CARF a QIP outlining the actions that have been or will be taken in response to the recommendations made in the survey report.

CARF-CCAC-accredited organizations must also submit an annual QIP with the Annual Conformance to Quality Report (ACQR).

Get Started

9. Submit an ACQR. An organization that earns accreditation submits to CARF a signed ACQR on the accreditation anniversary date in each of the years following the award.

10. CARF maintains contact with the organization during the accreditation tenure. Organizations are also encouraged to contact CARF as needed to help maintain conformance to CARF standards.

How do we prepare for accreditation?

What a CARF surveyor really wants to tell you

*By Gail M. Leiby, Executive Director
Community Workshop and Training Center, Inc.
Peoria, Ill.*

A hallmark of the CARF accreditation process is the consultation that the survey team offers the service provider. At times, service providers believe that they are intruding on the surveyors' time or admitting to shortcomings if they ask for guidance. The CARF surveyors would like to put your mind at ease. This guest comment by a CARF surveyor, who is also the director of an organization accredited in fourteen programs, gives a glimpse of what is in a surveyor's mind when visiting your organization.

As providers of services ourselves, we must conform to the same standards that you do. We, like you, are in the business of promoting independence in the lives of persons with disabilities and others in need of services. Even though you work in different settings and in different parts of the country, we come to your organization believing that you have embraced CARF's goal that the persons you serve are safe, satisfied, and treated with dignity and respect.

All sites should be prepared for a visit, and all employees should know what's going on. The site survey is not designed to contain surprises. You know where your strengths lie and where you may have weaknesses or challenges. We look for consistency in policies and procedures. Simply put, we look for evidence that you "walk the talk."

During the survey, designate a staff person to be the main contact for arranging our schedule and retrieving needed materials and documents. We have a great deal of material to cover in a short time, so try not to tie up the survey team's time with conversations other than ones about the survey at hand. However, please use us as a resource and for consultation. Take advantage of our expertise, experience, and ideas.

Your documentation should be current and well organized. In other words, we should not have to dig deep to see that you conform to the standards.

Select individuals for personal interviews who can easily express themselves. Your board members need to receive sufficient information about the accreditation process so that they too are prepared for interviews. This is your organization's opportunity to shine, not to make excuses for poor performance.

Most important, your organization needs to "live" the standards. Do not shelve the standards manuals to gather dust, even if your organization is not being resurveyed in the coming months. Each year, CARF seeks input from people active in the field as part of the standards development process. The CARF standards are excellent mirrors of the current thinking in the field.

Finally, relax. Smile. Take a deep breath. We're people just like you!

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
<p>Practices that demonstrate:</p> <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 <p>Evidence of practice can be used in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing services to consumers and referral sources - Seeking grants - Conducting fundraising events - Advocacy activities - Public education 		✓		
<p>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.</p>		✓		
<p>Enhanced risk management, which may lead to reduced exposure and insurance premiums.</p>	✓	✓		✓
<p>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.</p>	✓	✓		

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.