The Joint Commission Implements New Behavioral Health Care Standards to Address Eating Disorders

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois – April 28, 2016) – The Joint Commission is implementing new behavioral health care standards, effective July 1, 2016, to better address the care, treatment or services of eating disorders programs. The new standards impact Joint Commission-accredited behavioral health care organizations providing outpatient or residential eating disorders programs.

In the United States, 20 million women and 10 million men suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder at some time in their life, according to the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA). Ninety-five percent of those who have eating disorders are ages 12 to 25; and 25 percent of college-aged women engage in bingeing and purging.

“Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate among people with behavioral health disorders. They can cause very complex emotional and physical problems, resulting in severe medical consequences, including heart disease, bone loss, muscle weakness and depression,” says Tracy Collander, LCSW, executive director, Behavioral Health Care Accreditation Program, The Joint Commission. “This is why The Joint Commission decided it was so important to develop and implement new standards to improve patient safety and quality of care for eating disorder patients and their families.”

The new requirements are to appear in the following chapters of the Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Behavioral Health Care Organizations: Care, Treatment and Services; Leadership; Performance Improvement; and Rights and
Responsibilities of the Individual. The requirements also address several aspects of eating disorders programs, including assessments, data collection and analysis, transitions of care, roles of key staff and other clinicians, supervision of individuals served, family involvement and much more.

In addition, the standards have a strong emphasis on several variables of eating disorders that need to be evaluated and treated, as well as the integration of medical and nutritional components. The prepublication standards are available on The Joint Commission website.

Joint Commission standards are developed with input from health care professionals, providers, subject matter experts, consumers, government agencies and employers. They are informed by scientific literature and expert consensus and are reviewed by the Board of Commissioners. New standards are added only if they relate to patient safety or quality of care, have a positive impact on health outcomes, meet or surpass law and regulation, and can be accurately and readily measured.

“Everyone who struggles with these life-threatening illnesses deserves quality treatment and recovery. The implementation of The Joint Commission standards is an important step forward for the eating disorders field and for the millions of individuals and families NEDA serves,” says Claire Mysko, CEO, National Eating Disorders Association.

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The Joint Commission

Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission accredits and certifies nearly 21,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, nonprofit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation’s oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.