



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Speak Up™ Against Discrimination campaign from The Joint Commission

Educational campaign encourages patients to speak up if discriminated against

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, October 5, 2021) – The Joint Commission today released [Speak Up™ Against Discrimination](#), a new educational campaign that encourages patients to speak up if discriminated against while receiving health care. The campaign comes at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has brought health inequities and disparities to the forefront.

Differences in the quality of care received by patients or barriers and impediments to care can be due to a wide range of factors, including access to care or lack of resources, age, education level, gender identity or expression, geographic location, language, physical or mental ability, race or ethnicity, religion or culture, sexual orientation, and social and/or economic status.

The Speak Up campaign lists rights patients have, including:

- Timely and appropriate care that is free from discrimination.
- Being treated with courtesy and respect.
- An interpreter who can help effectively communicate with care providers.

Additionally, the campaign includes several recommended steps that patients can take if they experience discrimination and substandard care such as:

- Find out about the health care organization’s policy for reporting complaints. If possible, try to work with the organization.
- Talk to the organization’s patient advocacy department (sometimes called the patient liaison office or the patient advocacy team).
- File a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or with your state’s health department.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division.
- If the issue remains unaddressed and the organization is accredited or certified by The Joint Commission, [report a patient safety concern](#) to its Office of Quality and Patient Safety.

“The Joint Commission has no tolerance for discrimination in health care – every patient deserves to be treated with respect and dignity,” says Ana Pujols McKee, MD, executive vice president and chief medical officer, chief diversity and inclusion officer, The Joint

Commission. “Unfortunately, institutional, systemic racism and bias still exist in health care. While we have Joint Commission standards and requirements in place to help health care organizations provide care that is free from discrimination, I strongly encourage any patient who receives discriminatory care to speak up and act. By doing so, you may help future patients from being discriminated against.”

The Speak Up campaign includes an informational poster in both English and Spanish, as well as an animated video that features patients being discriminated against by health care professionals and another patient featuring inequity to care based on location.

Organizations are free to reproduce and disseminate [Speak Up™ Against Discrimination](#) materials if they credit The Joint Commission.

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About the *Speak Up*™ program

Launched in 2002, the award-winning [Speak Up](#)™ program has been used in more than 70 countries. It encourages patients to be their own advocates and to:

- **Speak up**
- **Pay attention**
- **Educate yourself**
- **Advocates (family members and friends) can help**
- **Know about your new medicine**
- **Use a quality health care organization**
- **Participate in all decisions about your care**

The Joint Commission’s refreshed *Speak Up*™ program debuted in 2018, after national market research including focus group feedback from patients and their families.

For updates on new *Speak Up*™ campaigns as they become available, sign up for email alerts or subscribe to the e-newsletter Joint Commission Online. For more information about the *Speak Up*™ program, visit [The Joint Commission website](#).

About 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 more than 22,000 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.