Quick Start Guide:
Joint Commission Standards on Health Equity

Beginning January 1, 2023, The Joint Commission will introduce new standards aimed at reducing health disparities. The new standards reside within the Leadership (LD) chapter, consisting of several elements of performance that position equity as a quality and safety priority. The requirements will apply to the following Joint Commission accredited organizations:

- Critical access hospitals and all other hospitals
- Ambulatory health care organizations providing primary care within the "Medical Centers" service in the ambulatory health care program (the requirements are not applicable to organizations providing episodic care, dental services or surgical services)
- Behavioral health care and human services organizations providing "Addictions Services," "Eating Disorders Treatment," "Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Delays," "Mental Health Services" and "Primary Physical Health Care" services.

Both hospitals and organizations must attest to elements one through six. Element seven is specifically for critical access hospitals, as noted in the description above this section. Additionally, documentation is required for elements two through five. This Quick Start Guide provides resources and direction on how to meet each element of performance.

Elements of Performance

Element 1	Quick Start Resources
The hospital designates an individual(s) to lead activities to reduce health care disparities for the hospital's patients. **Note:** Leading the hospital's activities to reduce health care disparities may be an individual's primary role or part of a broader set of responsibilities.	When designating a health equity champion, ensure that they are a person with strong team-building, leadership and advocacy skills. A champion can be self-identified as well as approved by a supervisor. Key characteristics to seek in a champion include: - Highly motivated - Self-aware (understands the systems of inequality, reflects on their own identity and biases, and can model vulnerability) - Problem-solver - Conflict management skills - Cultural responsiveness and humility (understands the need to tailor approaches to meet specific needs of various groups)

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Element 2 *(Documentation Required)*	Quick Start Resources
The hospital assesses the patient's health-related social needs and provides information about community resources and support services. **Note 1:** Hospitals determine which health-related social needs to include in the patient assessment. Examples of a patient's health-related social needs may include the following: • Access to transportation • Difficulty paying for prescriptions or medical bills • Education and literacy • Food insecurity • Housing insecurity **Note 2:** Health-related social needs may be identified for a representative sample of patients or for all patients.	Utilize the Social Vulnerability Index section of your hospital's Quarterly Health Disparities Report to identify the health-related social needs that are most prominent in your community. The Social Vulnerability Index Toolkit aids in developing resources and programming that addresses specific needs (e.g., housing, transportation, socioeconomic status, etc.). The Quick Start Guide: Screening for Social Determinants of Health provides an overview of social determinants of health (SDOH), general tips for incorporating SDOH screening into workflow and links to suggested resources, such as screening tools and learning modules. Learning Modules on the Social Determinants of Health (Modules #3-6): This four-part series of modules covers an overview of SDOH and its relation to health equity. It also covers the various screening tools available to collect information, using data to address SDOH, integrating SDOH into workflows, and using Z-codes to capture SDOH. Improving Health Equity: Partner with the Community: Through case studies, this guide provides examples of ways in which health systems might partner with others in the community to improve health equity, including key tactics to build a multistakeholder coalition.

Element 3 *(Documentation Required)*	Quick Start Resources
The hospital identifies health care disparities in its patient population by stratifying quality and safety data using the sociodemographic characteristics of the hospital's patients.	Utilize your hospital's Quarterly Disparities Reports to review claims-based measures by race/ethnicity and gender to identify any disparities. Health Equity Guide: Step 1 of the guide explores how to collect data, reviewing the necessary steps to start a quality improvement project that integrates reducing disparities.

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Element 3 (Documentation Required)	Quick Start Resources
Note 1: Hospitals may focus on areas with known disparities identified in scientific literature (for example, organ transplantation, maternal care, diabetes management) or select measures that affect all patients (for example, experience of care and communication). **Note 2:** Hospitals determine which sociodemographic characteristics to use for stratification analyses. Examples of sociodemographic characteristics may include the following: • Age • Gender • Preferred language • Race and ethnicity	Simple Strategies for Collecting REAL Data: This resource provides strategies on collecting REAL data at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels. Using REAL Data Learning Module: This module reviews how organizations can use REAL data to start a quality improvement project. Simple Strategies for Data Stratification: This resource reviews why data stratification is important and provides steps to take toward stratifying data at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels. Improving Health Equity Through Data Collection and Use: A Guide for Hospital Leaders: This exploratory interview identifies seven key strategies for collecting patient race, ethnicity and language data, as well as provides a review of the literature on leading practices in collecting REAL data. See page 6 for a table of key strategies and pages 7-8 for a case study. The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data Collection: Best Practices for LGBTQIA+ Care Office Hours Session presents recommendations for capturing SOGI, implementing a data collection process into patient workflows and educating staff on the importance of collecting SOGI. Ready, Set, Go! A Guide for Collecting Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity provides step by step information on how to implement SOGI data collection successfully at your facility.

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Element 4 *(Documentation Required)*	Quick Start Resources
The hospital develops a written action plan that describes how it will address at least one of the health care disparities identified in its patient population.	Conduct a root cause analysis to assist your team in identifying the underlying factors for disparities in your organization. Use a fishbone diagram to conduct the analysis. After determining the root cause, use the priority matrix to help prioritize which causes to address first in your action plan. Health Equity Guide: Steps 2-4 of the guide explore how to assess opportunities for improvement, gain buy-in and identify an intervention as well as the modality through which it will be administered. These steps will assist in laying out your action plan and creating goals.

Element 5 *(Documentation Required)*	Quick Start Resources
The hospital acts when it does not achieve or sustain the goal(s) in its action plan to reduce health care disparities.	When creating your action plan, be sure to include goals. In addition, note strategies that your hospital will incorporate when goals are not met. The Creating a Culture of Equity Work Plan includes several strategies that can be utilized when targets are not reached. Utilize health equity resource libraries to pull resources and strategies that will help pivot your action plan in a new direction when goals are not met: • HEAL: Health Equity Action Library • HQIN Resource Center • SIREN Evidence & Resource Library

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Element 6	Quick Start Resources
At least annually, the hospital informs key stakeholders, including leaders, licensed practitioners and staff, about its progress to reduce identified health care disparities.	Health Equity Guide: Step 5 of the guide reviews how to communicate with your organization about progress related to health equity. This resource includes a Communications Plan Worksheet that will guide your organization in sharing information with target audiences.

Note: Element 7 only applies to critical access hospitals.

Element 7	Quick Start Resources
The medical record contains the patient's race and ethnicity.	Simple Strategies for Collecting REAL Data: This resource provides information strategies on collecting REAL data at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels. Collect REAL Data Learning Module: This module explains why it's essential to collect REAL data and provides strategies to prepare teams to collect demographics across all areas uniformly.

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