

Guidance on out-of-cycle assessments

For primary and community healthcare services

This fact sheet provides guidance to primary and community healthcare services (healthcare services) accredited to the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards (Primary and Community Healthcare Standards) on requirements for out-of-cycle assessments, when there are material changes that could increase risk of patient harm.

Accreditation cycle

Healthcare services accredited to the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards must be assessed at least every two to three years to maintain accreditation. During this cycle, healthcare services may undergo changes for various reasons, such as ownership transitions, relocation or the introduction of new services. Some changes can significantly increase the risk of patient harm, in which case a review of compliance with the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards may be necessary. However, not all situations warrant an out-of-cycle assessment.

Risk management

Healthcare services are responsible for identifying and managing the risks associated with organisational changes. Examples of material changes that may increase the risk of patient harm are listed in **Box 1**.

Box 1. Examples of material changes

- Change of ownership and governance of a healthcare service
- Changes or prolonged gaps in key leadership or executive positions across a number of positions
- Significant increase in complexity of the scope of service provision
- Relocation of the healthcare service to new facilities
- Merger of one or more healthcare services.



Guidance on out-of-cycle assessment

A healthcare service that undergoes material changes should inform its accrediting agency of the changes as soon as practical.

Based on the information provided by the healthcare service, the accrediting agency should refer to [Table 1](#) to determine:

- whether an out-of-cycle assessment is warranted
- what type of assessment should be conducted
- how the existing accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate is impacted.

If Table 1 indicates that determinations will be made by the regulator and/or the Commission on a case-by-case basis, the accrediting agency must [submit a written request](#). The request must include detailed information about the extent of the material changes the healthcare service has undergone.

Some out-of-cycle assessments may result in a new accreditation certificate being issued, with or without changes to the existing accreditation expiry date. This should be discussed with the accrediting agency.

Timing

If a routine assessment is due within eight months of the changes taking place, and the risks can be assessed at the routine assessment, an out-of-cycle assessment is not warranted.

Costs

All costs of the out-of-cycle assessment are the responsibility of the primary and community healthcare service being assessed.

Questions?

Contact the Safety and Quality Advice Centre at AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or call 1800 304 056.

For more information

Please visit: safetyandquality.gov.au/pchs



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Table 1 Changes that may require an out-of-cycle assessment

Change	Requirement for an out-of-cycle assessment	Type of assessment	Impact on existing accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
General governance changes			
Change in ownership of a healthcare service	May be required where there is a substantial change in the organisation's governance policies and processes resulting from the change in ownership Determinations will be made by the regulator and/or the Commission on a case-by-case basis	Desktop review of relevant mandatory actions and interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	No changes to the accreditation expiry date A new accreditation certificate may be required if the organisation name has changed
Change of key members of the leadership team and/or board, or as a result of multiple vacancies over an extended period	May be required if all, or the majority of leadership positions are changed within a very short period of time Determinations will be made by the regulator and/or the Commission on a case-by-case basis	Desktop review of relevant mandatory actions and interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	No changes to the accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
Changes to facility licensing due to increased scope or commencing new scope of services	Required at the direction of the relevant regulator	As per requirements of the relevant regulator, may involve assessment to different standards	A new certificate may be required as part of a regulatory process. This will be at the discretion of the regulator and/or the Commission
Expansion into new areas of service provision	May be required where there is a significant increase in the complexity and scope of services Determinations will be made by the regulator and/or the Commission on a case-by-case basis	As per requirements of the relevant regulator and/or the Commission, may involve assessment to different standards	A new certificate may be required as part of a regulatory process. This will be at the discretion of the regulator and/or the Commission

Change	Requirement for an out-of-cycle assessment	Type of assessment	Impact on existing accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
Relocation of a healthcare service			
Relocation with changes to the physical address	May be required in exceptional circumstances Determinations will be made by the regulator and/or the Commission on a case-by-case basis	Desktop review of relevant mandatory actions and interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	No changes to the accreditation expiry date A new accreditation certificate is required if the address and/or organisation name have changed
Merging of healthcare services			
Merger of healthcare services, where all services are accredited	Not required	Not required	The earliest accreditation expiry date applies New accreditation certificate may be required if the accreditation expiry date and/or the organisation name have changed
Merger of healthcare services, where one or more of the merging healthcare services are not accredited	Not required if the primary/parent healthcare service in the merger is accredited	Not required	The earliest accreditation expiry date applies New accreditation certificate may be required if the accreditation expiry date and/or the organisation name have changed
	Required if the primary/parent healthcare service in the merger is not accredited	Follows the routine initial and final assessment with a remediation period for any 'not met' actions	A new accreditation certificate is issued