CARF ACCREDITATION

What It Means and Why It's Important?

When buying a car, many people look to Consumer Reports as the last word on quality, cost and consumer satisfaction. Or, when seeking a new physician, they carefully examine the doctor’s credentials, board certification, hospital affiliation, experience and specializations. Yet when considering a home- and community-based rehabilitation program, do you even know how to evaluate it or to whom to turn for answers?

Most people, including many referring health care professionals, don't. That's why there's CARF - the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. CARF is considered the gold standard, the premiere accrediting body for rehabilitation programs: facilities that are CARF-accredited must meet stringent international standards. The most interesting thing about CARF, however, is that it is a voluntary accreditation. This means that organizations seeking CARF accreditation spend their own time, money and efforts to undergo the in-depth assessment and review that the organization demands. Why do all this when home and community rehabilitation programs are not required by law to be accredited?

Basically, CARF assures our consumers that this is a specialty that values them so much that it has voluntarily agreed to adhere to vigorous standards and open the specialty up to intense scrutiny.

A Consumer-Driven Mission
An independent, not-for-profit accrediting body, CARF provides accreditation not just for rehabilitation but for other human services as well, including employment, child and family, and aging. All shares the same approach that of being in partnership. This means that the survey process is not centered on inspection but rather on consultation, where the CARF survey team works with the provider to improve service resources and outcomes.

CARF sees itself as a catalyst for enhancing the quality of life of the persons served by CARF-accredited organizations. In fact, consumers play an active and vital role in the entire accreditation process, from helping to develop and apply the national performance standards to giving input on the quality of services received by individual rehabilitation programs. In doing so, CARF casts a wide net, placing particular emphasis on diversity and cultural competence in all CARF activities and associations. This contributes to what CARF sees as its core values: ensuring that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; that all people have access to needed services that achieve optimum outcomes; and that all people are empowered to exercise informed choice.

CARF standards are continually developed and revised through a series of leadership panels, national advisory committees, focus groups and field reviews relying heavily on active involvement at all levels by persons served.

A Rigorous Accreditation Process
During the survey process itself, what does CARF look at? Everything!! Surveyors scrutinize our clinical practices, business practices, policies and procedures, market and strategic planning, retention and recruitment efforts, quality assurance, safety standards, committee meeting minutes, advocacy initiatives in the community, employee credentialing, and information management. CARF pays particular attention to the latter. They are interested in how we collect data and how we use it to improve services and provide durable outcomes for our consumers.
In addition, when the surveyors are on-site at each location, they spend time speaking with everyone involved in the rehabilitation process. They will talk with external sources, including case manager, a referrer and several clients and their families. There is only one way to prepare for a CARF survey: to build the CARF standards into everything you do.

**A Hallmark of Quality**
CARF offers several levels of accreditation, the highest being the Three-Year Accreditation. This indicates that the provider is meeting or exceeding CARF standards and will not need to be reviewed again for another three years. High Hope Employment Services, Inc. has received this accreditation for seven consecutive three-year terms since 1990. The second level is the One-Year Accreditation, which indicates that while there are still some existing deficiencies in conforming to CARF standards; the program shows capability and commitment toward correcting the deficiencies and making progress. The third level is known as Provisional Accreditation, which means the provider is still functioning at the One-Year level the following year, and has one year to correct the deficiencies and meet CARF standards or it will receive an outcome of non-accreditation.

For more information regarding CARF please visit their website at [www.carf.org](http://www.carf.org)