



CAREWELL URGENT CARE

UCAOA Accreditation Confirms Their Focus on the Patient, Brings Multiple Rewards



To learn more, visit the accreditation section on ucaoa.org.

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Staff at CareWell Urgent Care Centers of Massachusetts knew from the very beginning that accreditation would not only be good to have—but that it could help them rapidly advance, be the best and become the leaders that they are today.

So, in 2012, soon after they opened their first location, CareWell began to research accrediting bodies, including the Urgent Care Association of America (UCAOA), to see which would best fit their needs.

“We looked into Joint Commission accreditation, but quickly realized UCAOA would be more salient for us,” said Terry Giove, vice president of operations for CareWell, which by late 2016 will include 17 locations. “UCAOA focuses exclusively on urgent care, while the Joint Commission is more hospital based, so the choice was fairly easy for us to make.”

Additionally, at that time, no one else in the New England region had been accredited by UCAOA.

“It was obvious to us that having this distinction would give us a unique strategic advantage, as well as help us be the very best we could be, so we didn’t hesitate in moving forward to begin the accreditation process,” said John Cornwell, MD, who serves as medical director for CareWell.

Prior to beginning the process, CareWell had already put forth a significant effort in order to become licensed by the Department of Health for the State of Massachusetts. This licensing process, which Giove describes as “highly rigorous,” required them to put multiple policies and procedures in place.

Quickly, they recognized that much of the work they had already done to prepare for licensure (which they received in June 2014) could also be leveraged to help them with their UCAOA Accreditation.

The work CareWell did to prepare for the Department of Health focused heavily on public health and safety issues—ranging from architectural design, like locks on the doors, to disease reporting, such as how many patients had presented with the flu or other diseases.

While these things are important, Shaun Ginter, MBA, FACHE, president and CEO for CareWell, says the preparation for UCAOA Accreditation was very valuable because it was highly focused on the human element—people and patients.

"The key noticeable difference was that UCAOA was highly focused on issues like patient flow, patient comfort and how we treated patients," said Ginter. "Knowing that this mattered to UCAOA really confirmed to us that our own focus on patient-centered care is what is important, and is at the core of our practice and urgent care."

The CareWell team that worked on the accreditation process included members with differing perspectives, including the medical director (Cornwell, MD); CEO (Ginter); VP of operations (Giove); and the Director of Marketing Dave Low.

Giove says the process was straightforward—they requested and received the accreditation instructions and documentation from UCAOA, then began to assess their organization and identify any gaps and develop strategies to close them. Next, they went on site visits to make sure sites were in alignment with the expectations.

Although the majority of CareWell's practices were already in alignment with UCAOA standards, there were several improvements they made due to their UCAOA accreditation survey, including:

- Improved the process for credentialing providers by creating a system of checks and balances with the medical director, operations and billing.
- Created forms that were easier to read as well as a monthly cadence for review and reporting on credentialing status from the various payers.
- Took advantage of UCAOA's discounted CME coursework.

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- Increased the frequency of their peer-to-peer chart audits as well as supervisory chart reviews. This resulted in improved front-end charting efficiencies, fewer errors and significant time saved overall.

In part because of the prior work they had done for their Department of Health licensure, their UCAOA Accreditation process ultimately only took them four weeks, from the time they began to the final site visit from the UCAOA surveyor.

"It was a rewarding and enjoyable," says Giove about the process as well as the surveyor site visits. "The surveyor was interested in assessing our quality in patient care and customer service, and had been involved in urgent care herself, so we felt that she really focused on what matters to us—the patient."

Dave Low, director of marketing for CareWell, agrees.

"In every decision we make, we are laser focused on the patient. Everything we do, we do it to enhance the patient experience. We want them to come back and we want our word of mouth to be excellent," says Low. "We felt the surveyor was in alignment with this, and we were very pleased with the entire process."

For organizations considering accreditation, Giove says the things that helped them most was thoroughness and attention to detail, such as having a policy and procedures manual in place prior to beginning, and making sure staff have carefully reviewed and understand it. Also, don't just create policies and procedures because that's what you're supposed to do, she says. Instead, make sure they will be something that you will use and that will make you better.

She also recommends assembling a team with different perspectives to manage the UCAOA Accreditation process, and to include clinical staff, marketing, finance, the CEO, and others to weigh in.

CareWell received their UCAOA accreditation in May 2014, and have been implementing the standards ever since, and soon they will be reapplying for their accreditation. In each of their locations, they have a UCAOA Accreditation wall plaque prominently displayed in the lobby area, so all patients and visitors are aware that they have earned this distinction. Giove believes doing this helps patients gain an extra level of confidence in CareWell providers, knowing accreditation has been earned.

"We had a very positive experience. In part, I believe that is because we approached this from the beginning as an opportunity to learn and grow," says Giove. "It is not at all about being punitive and never felt that way. Instead it was enjoyable and validating, and the reward—our UCAOA Accreditation—is definitely of great value to us."

Leverage UCAOA Resources to Achieve Accreditation:

- Attend UCAOA conferences/conventions to network with others in the accreditation process.
- Take advantage of the Urgent Care Management Certificate (UCMC) training program and the Online Education Library to help you prepare for an on-site survey.
- Invest in the UCAOA Accreditation Standards and Preparation Manual to establish best practices in your organization.
- Purchase the Policy and Procedure Manual to augment and standardize your organization's policies.

Visit ucaoa.org to learn more.