

Accreditation for Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Centres: Getting Started

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Canadian Centre
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Accreditation for Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Centres: Getting Started



Foreword

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), in partnership with the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions (CECA), is pleased to present *Accreditation for Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Centres: Getting Started*. This resource has been produced on behalf of the CCSA–CECA Accreditation Stakeholders Working Group, a joint partnership between CCSA, CECA and the six organizations in Canada that offer accreditation programs for residential substance abuse treatment facilities.

In 2011, CECA and CCSA conducted a review of how regulations, licensing requirements and accreditation standards are applied to publicly funded Canadian residential substance abuse treatment services. The review revealed that there are a wide range of relationships between these agencies, licensing authorities and regulatory bodies throughout the country, but that only about **two-thirds** of Canadian agencies participate in formal accreditation processes with the six accreditation bodies that serve residential substance abuse treatment programs.

The primary objective of this initiative is to support residential treatment facilities in delivering quality care to those in our communities needing help and treatment for substance use disorders. We know that accreditation promotes excellence in service quality based on standards that reflect current research and leading practice. While we strive to achieve accreditation for all treatment agencies and know there are a large number of private residential treatment facilities across Canada, our current focus is on publicly funded residential treatment facilities.

It is our hope that this document will be a useful tool for introducing treatment facilities to the value of accreditation, and to connect facilities with other organizations that have completed an accreditation program to provide a first-hand account on how it impacted their facility. Ultimately, this document and the contacts it will enable will allow facilities to easily identify the accreditation program that best fits the needs of their organization and clients.

Any Canadian requiring services from a residential treatment facility should expect a consistent level of quality care when they enter that facility for their substance use disorder. The accreditation process is founded on evidence-based standards that reflect the best practices in the field. It provides an indication of an organization's pursuit of excellence to achieve the best client outcomes.

Rita Notarandrea, Chief Executive Officer, CCSA,
Co-Chair, Accreditation Stakeholders Working Group



Accreditation provides an opportunity for substance abuse treatment facilities to demonstrate to clients, staff and funders alike that they are committed to continuous improvement. Through promoting accreditation, we can work collectively to raise the quality of our residential substance abuse treatment services all across Canada.

Barry Andres, President, CECA,
Co-Chair, Accreditation Stakeholders Working Group





1. Introduction

Purpose

Accreditation of Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities: Getting Started provides administrators and staff of publicly funded residential treatment centres across Canada with concrete information about accreditation, including some common misconceptions, benefits, available supports and how to identify which accreditation program is the best fit for their facility. Whether a facility is currently accredited and looking to justify renewal of its status or completely new to the accreditation process, this resource provides facilities with concrete information to help inform their decision to pursue accreditation.

Organization

Section 2, What Is Accreditation, begins by explaining the concept of accreditation and then outlines the current state of accreditation programming in Canada. A subsection on common misconceptions about accreditation is followed by a brief summary of the literature surrounding the benefits of accreditation, which lists the direct benefits of accreditation to the residential facility, as well as to its clients, staff members and government funders. The section concludes by describing the impact accreditation can have on an organization.

Section 3, Case Studies of Accreditation, provides first-hand accounts of the accreditation experience of five publicly funded residential treatment facilities across Canada. The case studies provide a more in-depth look into the experiences of different treatment facilities throughout the accreditation process. The accounts explain why these facilities sought accreditation, how they chose an accreditation organization with which to work, their experience of the process, and advice to other facilities considering accreditation.

Section 4, Tools to Support Accreditation, begins with a list of the common services Canada's accreditation bodies provide to ensure the success of residential treatment facilities throughout the accreditation process. It proceeds to outline the training programs offered by the accreditation bodies to assist facilities and their staff in the process. The section includes a checklist outlining key elements to look for when determining what program is the best fit for a specific residential treatment facility and concludes with contact details through which facilities can obtain more information.

Accreditation of Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities also contains short testimonials from individuals who have recently participated in the accreditation process in their own residential substance abuse treatment centre. This resource will leave readers with a better understanding of accreditation and its benefits, improved awareness of the supports available to facilities throughout the accreditation process, and increased knowledge about how to proceed with that process.



2. What Is Accreditation

Accreditation is an internationally recognized process that evaluates whether an organization or program meets a set of quality standards in the provision of services, and that provides mechanisms to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of organizational processes. Accreditation of residential substance abuse treatment facilities promotes excellence in the delivery of care through the use of standards that are based on current research and leading practices. By seeking and achieving accreditation, a facility demonstrates its commitment to continuously seeking ways to enhance the quality of care it provides to clients.

An independent accreditation organization establishes evidence-based standards based on leading research and identified best practices. The accreditation process is undertaken by the organization that establishes the standards. The process usually involves regular assessments of organizational or program performance according to the standards and conducted through both self-assessment and peer review. Following assessments, a work plan is developed and implemented to ensure that the organization or program is continually striving to meet established quality standards and best practices.

Accreditation of Residential Substance Abuse Facilities across Canada

There are an estimated 400 public, private and not-for-profit agencies that provide residential substance abuse treatment in Canada (not including hospital-based programs).¹ Of these, approximately **two thirds** have a relationship with one of Canada's six accreditation bodies.²

The percentage of residential substance abuse treatment facilities that are accredited varies widely across provinces and territories. In Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, where there are four facilities in each province and all of them are accredited. By contrast, in some larger provinces, **less than one quarter** of all treatment agencies are accredited.

In 2011, Quebec mandated accreditation as a legal requirement for all public and private residential substance abuse treatment facilities. Today all institutions in the province providing these services must be accredited by a recognized body every four years.

Common Misconceptions about Accreditation

The 2014 accreditation report by Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) and the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions (CECA) included results from a survey of non-accredited facilities. These facilities identified some of the perceived challenges and barriers associated with becoming accredited. These barriers included the following perceptions:

- Accreditation is too costly;
- We can't afford the time and effort;
- We're not ready yet; and
- There is no real benefit to accreditation.

¹ Laurence Thompson Strategic Consulting. (2011). Report of a scan of regulations, licensing requirements and accreditation standards for Canadian residential addiction treatment services and facilities. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Executive Council on Addictions.

² Hedlund, David (2014). Accreditation of residential addiction treatment. A cross-Canada scan of accreditation processes and standards of accreditation organizations for public and private residential addiction treatment services and facilities for youth and adults. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Executive Council on Addictions.



The majority of facilities interviewed identified cost as a barrier. In addition, many noted that expectations on staff are already high and accreditation is seen as arduous – especially if beginning the process for the first time. Some facilities stated they were interested in accreditation and planned to get involved in the process at some point, but needed to further refine their policies and procedures across multiple sites. Many had yet to do the research about which accreditation body would be the best choice for their organization. The following section address these misconceptions with information about the benefits of accreditation for facilities, staff, decision makers and clients.

The Benefits of Accreditation

Canada’s six accreditation bodies conduct systematic, standards-based peer reviews to promote quality and a high standard of care across residential substance abuse treatment services. By completing the accreditation process, treatment facilities demonstrate their commitment to excellence, ongoing quality improvement, risk management practices, benchmarking and accountability. Accreditation thus provides direct benefits to the program, its clients, facility staff, and external partners and funders.

A literature review conducted by Accreditation Canada lists benefits associated with accreditation identified in academic literature.³ The following is a summary of some of these key benefits as they relate to residential substance-abuse treatment facilities.

Organizational benefits

- Provides a framework to help create and implement systems and processes that improve operational effectiveness and advance positive health outcomes;
- Improves communication and collaboration internally and with external stakeholders;
- Strengthens interdisciplinary team effectiveness;
- Decreases liability costs, identifies areas for additional funding for organizations and provides a platform for negotiating this funding;
- Enables on-going self-analysis of performance in relation to standards; and
- Provides organizations with a well-defined vision for sustainable quality improvement initiatives.

Benefits for clients

- Improves patients’ health outcomes;
- Mitigates the risk of adverse events;
- Promotes the use of ethical frameworks; and
- Improves an organization’s reputation among end-users and enhances their awareness and perception of quality care.

Testimonial

I have been involved in treatment centre accreditation for over 25 years and have worked with three different accreditation bodies. I have experience in the roles of team staff, executive director, accreditation surveyor and peer reviewer, as well as participating in standards development.

For me, the most important feature of accreditation is how it lends a structure to talking about and working towards delivering meaningful and effective services to clients.

Debra Dale, Youth Solvent Addiction Committee

³ Adapted from Nicklin, Wendy. (2015). The value and impact of health care accreditation: A review of the literature. Ottawa, Ont.: Accreditation Canada. Retrieved from www.accreditation.ca/sites/default/files/value-and-impact-en.pdf.



Benefits for staff

- Promotes capacity-building, professional development and organizational learning;
- Increases an organization's compliance with quality and safety standards;
- Promotes an understanding of how each person's job contributes to the organization's mission and services;
- Provides a team-building opportunity for staff and improves their understanding of their coworkers' functions; and
- Contributes to increased job satisfaction staff.

Benefits to partners and funders

- Decreases variance in practice among staff and decision makers;
- Supports the efficient and effective use of resources in health care services;
- Ensures an acceptable level of quality among staff;
- Enhances the organization's understanding of the continuum of care; and
- Engenders a spill-over effect, whereby the accreditation of one service helps to improve the performance of other service areas; and
- Demonstrates credibility and a commitment to quality and accountability.

Testimonial

It is a great honour to be accredited through CARF. As the clinical director of Edgewood treatment centre, I find that CARF holds us accountable. What I mean by that is I believe that we offer excellent care to our patients, and CARF doesn't get in the way of that care. Rather, they ask us to prove it. They hold us accountable to make sure the person served is getting the highest level of withdrawal management and inpatient treatment.

I have found that CARF demands that we strive for excellence. This has propelled Edgewood to develop a new assessment tool that incorporates both the American Society of Addiction Medicine patient placement tool and the DSM 5. This tool uses two gold standard assessment devices to make sure we are properly placing and serving our patients.

Every three years when we get ready for our CARF accreditation I am reminded of the excellent care we give and how CARF helps us deliver that high level of care.

Elizabeth Loudon, Clinical Director, Edgewood Health Network

The Impact of Accreditation

Although there is growing evidence suggesting that accreditation processes produce positive system results that can impact client service, the direct connection between accreditation and client outcomes is not yet clearly established in the research (Nicklin 2011). Nevertheless, professionals consulted in the 2014 report completed by CECA and CCSA held strong views about the benefits of accreditation. Much of the reasoning centred on the impact of accreditation on system improvement, including facility programs, policies, procedures and structures, and the capacity of staff (Hedlund 2014).



People interviewed in this project made the following points about the impact of accreditation based on their experience:

- “We do not have time to keep up with all the best practice information and we rely on the accrediting agency to provide much of that information for us.”
- “If you want to have a quality improvement focus, the accreditation process reminds you of that priority and reinforces it on a regular basis. It strengthens your own ongoing self-analysis and discipline around continuous improvement.”
- “Beyond the formal review process, having respected peers come to discuss your agency’s programs and approaches is motivating. It is a form of knowledge exchange.”
- “There are great benefits in participating as a surveyor. Surveyors bring back a wealth of information to their own agency.”
- “Staff members gain a sense of confidence and pride from a successful peer review. This motivates them to provide better service.”
- “Standards related to governance help clarify board roles and relationships as well as organizational structures and processes.”
- “Accreditation helps to get staff buy-in on some issues: ‘We have to do this because we could be cited, or it was recommended during accreditation.’”
- “There is no doubt that what you have to do to prepare for accreditation makes your programs better and improves the experience for clients.”
- “Accreditation is a good motivator to make sure policies and procedures have been developed to address the important issues where guidance is required.”
- “Policies and procedures should align with best practice standards. Accreditation requires policies and procedures to be kept up to date with standards that are also evolving.”
- “Accreditation helps staff members understand their workplace better, and the role their agency plays in the broader service system.”
- “Accreditation emphasizes data gathering for indicator monitoring and encourages other quality improvement activities. This stimulates interest in further research within organizations.”

Testimonial

The Accreditation Canada program helped us gain a maturity in our organization that we actually didn’t realize how much we really needed. It helped us establish accountability and a transparency.

Invaluable to help us reach the next level for our organization, we didn’t know what we didn’t know. A challenging program - we needed to do it.

Patricia Bencz, CEO, Our House Addiction Recovery Centre



Testimonial

As we enter our fourth accreditation cycle, we can genuinely state that the Council on Accreditation process has helped us build a culture of continuous improvement, learning, accountability and professionalism. The COA standards have changed concurrently with evolving research, prompting us to develop our operations and programs to the highest possible standard of quality. We have tangible evidence of our successes and improvements, and sharing that with staff and stakeholders has built a strong sense of both pride and confidence in our services, which, in turn, has translated into consistent success in securing both short and long term funding to address the much-needed services in our community.

Christine Mohr, Executive Director, Options Community Services



3. Case Studies of Accreditation

The case studies in this section are based on accounts provided by executives from accredited facilities. The accounts highlight the benefits of accreditation and provide advice to facilities that are considering becoming accredited.

Our House Addiction Recovery Centre

Our House Addiction Recovery Centre is a private, not-for-profit, residential treatment centre for men, located in Edmonton, Alberta. The 60-bed recovery centre provides residents with a safe environment that is drug- and alcohol-free. It offers extensive programming, assessments, mental health and addictions counselling, crisis intervention, community programs, and life skills development services.

Patricia Bencz has been the executive director of Our House Addiction Recovery Centre since 2006. She has been essential in establishing a program that facilitates clients' journeys away from substance abuse and toward recovery and independent lives. She initiated the accreditation process, which the organization has successfully maintained since 2009. Ms. Bencz summarized the organization's accreditation story.

Why accreditation?

In 2009, there was a rumour the Ministry would only fund accredited organizations. Staff members were anxious to begin accreditation work, as we knew we were a bit behind and our organization faced some challenges.

Our risk management was weak and we were operating under the radar. No one checked that medication use was supervised; no one was making sure our quality and safety were up to par. The onus was on us to do that, and we were careful, but we weren't as sophisticated as we should have been. That was a problem.

A strong program yields positive results

We looked at another accrediting organization, but its program was less challenging. We could tell Accreditation Canada was going to push us harder, and frankly, that's what we needed.

Initially, we weren't familiar with a lot of the language used in Accreditation Canada's Qmentum program, but with time and experience, that part became easier and we learned a lot. As an organization with only 12 full-time employees, it was initially challenging to integrate quality improvement into our work processes. But we did it! Once we integrated accreditation into our everyday activities, it became a normal and manageable part of the whole environment. We were able to do it entirely on our own, without hiring a consultant.

The on-site survey opportunity

During our on-site survey, the surveyors were very nice and truly helpful. They understood our sector, and did their best to work with our organization. They had backgrounds in addictions treatment and it went well every time. Accreditation Canada staff were always available to respond to any of the questions we had during the survey.



The benefits of accreditation

We don't worry any more that a major component of our service delivery has been overlooked. We know everyone is properly trained, our processes are more standardized, and we actively mitigate risks. We document near misses so that we can figure out how to avoid them. Our staff members feel safer, and are much more safety conscious; there are more checks and balances in place now. A culture of safety is engrained throughout the entire organization. Our clients are happy and healthy. Our referral list has increased from less than a single page of referrals in 2008 to four pages of referrals in 2014, from over 100 organizations across Canada.

Our client base has expanded because now that we're accredited, we are permitted by the Northwest Territories to serve its clients. Veteran Affairs also likes to be sure that service providers are accredited before it sends patients to a facility for treatment. Our community members frequently ask about our accreditation status, and are always pleased to hear we're accredited.

We can't say enough about how accreditation helped us mature as an organization; it gave us credibility we just wouldn't have had otherwise. Accreditation played a large role in increasing demand for our programs.

Advice about accreditation

Do it! I think organizations that haven't experienced accreditation should try it and learn about national standards, and think about what they should expect of themselves. We recommend Accreditation Canada to our peers. Although the Ministry of Health doesn't require it, we intend to continue with accreditation. It's easy for things to slip because you get caught up in the day-to-day, especially at a small organization. Accreditation Canada keeps us on our game; it's smart to keep up with best practices and be accountable.

Enviros Shunda Creek

Opened in 2009, Shunda Creek is a wilderness-based, 10-bed, 12-week residential program serving Alberta's young adult males 18–24 years of age who have substance abuse issues and may also be struggling with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health issues. Shunda Creek is a three-hour drive northwest of Calgary, near Nordegg, Alberta. The clients are supported in their recovery by a team of 15 staff living on-site and rotating through a variety of consecutive day rotations. Shunda Creek is one of 15 programs provided by Enviros, which has been successfully accredited for over 15 years. Bev Oldham, Manager, Enviros, told about the organization's experience with accreditation.

Why accreditation?

Accreditation holds organizations and their practices accountable to clients, their families and service professionals, while also demonstrating to our funders and communities that we provide programs of high quality, with high levels of accountability, and that we ensure best sector practice.

Enviros takes pride in offering high-quality programs and we have always believed that we do. The accreditation process, while initially rigorous, assisted our agency to celebrate what we do well, while bringing to light our areas of vulnerability, and confirms sound practice to reduce our risks.

Accreditation standards, once achieved and maintained in everyday practice, ensure that subsequent reviews, although somewhat anxiety provoking, become easier to navigate through. The accreditation process encouraged us to develop better systems of accountability from personnel files, to medication delivery, to client case management, to ensuring clients rights are upheld.



Supports while preparing for the on-site survey

We initially looked at a number of accrediting bodies when we were first exploring accreditation. Enviro chose the Canadian Accreditation Council (CAC) as our accrediting body as their standards and service delivery philosophy aligned with the culture of our organization with respect to client experiences, practice and policies. The standards manual is exceptionally well structured as a guide through the process. The self-study document is also a great guide in developing policies and aligning practices to meet standards. Additionally, CAC was available initially to explain the process and then ongoing by phone and email to respond to any questions we had. Due to the uniqueness of some of our programs, CAC was helpful in supporting us to find common ground in meeting standards while still ensuring best practice.

The on-site survey opportunity

The peer review is not a fault finding process, but rather an opportunity to put your agency on display to reviewers with similar client demographics and service needs. Reviewers as peers understand our industry and the challenges faced in programs, and are sensitive to the challenges faced by our clients and encourage their participation throughout the process. Staff report being anxious prior to the staff interviews, but repeatedly emerge saying it was a pleasant experience and an opportunity to speak to the great work they feel that they do.

The benefits and value of accreditation

The benefits experienced through accreditation have been numerous: increased confidence in our high quality programs by our various funders, greater ability to apply for grants and funding as an accredited organization, reduction in risk and liability exposure resulting in greater confidence by our insurers, increased referral confidence resulting in increased bed usage and additional program expansion funding, and, most importantly, greater client and family satisfaction.

Our internal systems are standardized, staff are better trained and equipped to work with our clients, and clients are aware of their rights and engage in their treatment with increased confidence. In the end aren't we all here for our clients? Accreditation demonstrates our commitment to our clients through ensuring best practices, ethical service delivery and client safety.

Beyond the financial and client benefits of accreditation, CAC also supports accredited agencies by providing training opportunities such as medication delivery, peer review training and shadow review opportunities, all of which enhance staff awareness of standards. Peer reviews also provide opportunities to visit other agencies and programs similar to your own, exposing staff to new and creative ways of delivering like programs.

Advice about accreditation

Accreditation is beneficial to your organization from the perspective of clients, staff and funders. The initial process looks daunting, but the support provided by the Canadian Accreditation Council is tremendous. You may find as we did that often we are practicing according to standards, but could only speak to the practice anecdotally. Accreditation provides us with proof that we adhere to high standards of service delivery; it has mitigated agency, staff and client exposure to risk, and it ensures best practice models and delivery of programs ethically and safely.



Westover Treatment Centre

Westover Treatment Centre is a relatively small, non-profit agency (26 employees) providing residential treatment and community support programs in southwestern Ontario since 1986. In addition to its main office and residential program in Thamesville, it has many Recovery Support Group locations throughout the area, including Windsor, London, Sarnia and several rural communities. Its primary funding comes from the Local Health Integration Network and the provincial government, but it also accepts a limited number of private pay clients in the residential treatment program. Services provided include a 19-day chemical dependence residential program, a Stage 2 residential relapse prevention program and a residential co-dependency program, along with a family program on weekends. Recently, a community-based women's program was added. Ron Elliott, Executive Director, Westover Treatment Centre, recounted the organization's accreditation story.

Why accreditation?

In today's world there is increasing emphasis on accountability by funded agencies. Funders, community partners and clients are increasingly expecting that a service provider demonstrates that it is committed to delivering quality services and meeting standards that will help it achieve this. If an organization is accredited, it tells everyone that you have been reviewed by a neutral third party and met standards of best practice.

Why the Canadian Centre for Accreditation?

Westover's programs had been accredited once before by a different accreditation body, but in 2013 for our next accreditation we wanted to use an accreditation process that was Canadian with standards more relevant for the Canadian context. It was also important to us that Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) had worked with Addictions and Mental Health Ontario (an association of service providers) to develop the CCA standards. Additionally, we wanted to have all our organizational operations accredited this time — beyond a narrower focus on our programs that had been the case with our previous accreditation.

Accreditation process

It took us about one year of work to get ready for the site visit. We chose not to hire an outside consultant, feeling that we would have more control over the process and more learning if we did it with our own staff. We very much appreciated the model policies and other resources in CCA's resource library and the support we received from CCA staff. By establishing a lead within the organization and engaging key staff in the process, we were able to work together to meet or even exceed the standards expected by the accreditors. Staff engagement led to staff embracing the changes necessary and the process in general. The site visit was professional and supportive while at the same time challenging in those areas that needed further work or better definition. The feedback from CCA after the site visit pointed out the improvements that needed to be completed before a final decision on accreditation was made, giving Westover a sense of partnering with the accreditor to achieve the best outcome.

Benefits

There are many benefits to being accredited. Externally, it has definitely increased Westover's credibility with funders and service provider partners. Within the organization it has brought our practices up to key standards and most importantly has supported an ongoing culture of quality improvement which is visible throughout our programs and services. Staff have continued the quality



improvement journey through engaging in LEAN initiatives. Accreditation has led to the board improving its functioning and continuing to engage in strategic planning and review of its governance model.

Advice to other organizations:

Rather than fearing that you can't afford the time, effort and costs involved, the current environment has changed so that service organizations really **can't afford not to be accredited**. You will likely never feel totally ready, but you need to approach the accreditation process as one of gradual improvement, knowing that you will always have something to work on. Westover has significantly benefitted from our CCA accreditation and we are committed to continuing on this path.

Round Lake Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centre

Since 1979, Round Lake Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre, an internationally accredited non-profit, residential facility, has provided alcohol and drug treatment for over 10,000 clients, many whom are now living clean, sober and balanced lives. Its world-class, science-based clinical treatment is grounded in cultural teaching and practices that combine to develop a healthy body, mind and spirit.

Up to 36 clients participate in a five to six week long program for males, females, couples and adult aged family groups, as well as spouses who may be admitted mid-treatment as spousal supports. Round Lake is dedicated to the continuum of care, working closely with members of the clients' communities and families to ensure their ongoing support. A refresher program is offered to clients who wish to return to the centre to strengthen and enhance the wellness they have achieved. Round Lake has become a leader in the field of First Nations' addiction recovery.

Round Lake's vision commits it to being the leading-edge provider of culturally based, client-focused treatment and training programs that support and empower individuals, families and healthy communities. Its mission is to facilitate the personal wellness of First Nations people by providing culturally sensitive treatment and training services. Here is the organization's accreditation story as told by Marlene Isaac, Executive Director, Round Lake Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centre.

Accreditation history

Round Lake has been internationally accredited by CARF for the past 20 years. The current three-year accreditation represents the highest level of accreditation that can be awarded to an organization and reflects a substantial conformance to the standards established by CARF. An organization receiving a three-year accreditation has undergone a rigorous peer review process and has demonstrated to a team of surveyors during an on-site visit that its programs and services are measurable, accountable and of the highest quality. Providers that meet CARF standards have demonstrated a commitment to being among the best available.

Choice of accreditors

At the time that Round Lake became accredited there were no Canadian-based accreditation organizations for treatment centres, so CARF was the only choice. But we have chosen to remain accredited by CARF because its internationally and locally recognized stamp of excellence reassures our clients, community and funders that we offer the highest standard of services and accountability.

CARF's unique client-centred approach ensures that clients come first. CARF's insistence on continuous quality assurance ensures best practices that are supported by research and validated by outcomes. Yearly updates to standards ensure that our organization is abreast of the latest developments. Training programs are comprehensive and available for employees. Advice and support are only a phone call away.



Although some CARF standards do not apply in a Canadian setting due to government regulations, CARF is quick to understand the differences and to modify their Canadian requirements. For the most part, the standards are applicable to all behavioral health facilities.

Preparation

CARF surveyors are welcomed to our site every three years because we are confident in our processes, but understand that there is always room for improvement. The collegial and consultative approach of the experienced and knowledgeable surveyors enhances our policies and procedures and thus our program. Policies and procedures are updated continuously in response to changing needs and statistical data. Ongoing performance management and measurement undertaken in conjunction with yearly CARF updates means that CARF survey preparation is not onerous.

CARF surveyors are given copies of policies, procedures and plans prior to their arrival on site and are well-prepared prior to their visit. Their review is an excellent opportunity to learn about international best practices from experienced, competent professionals. Receiving notice of being granted three-year accreditation is a celebratory and congratulatory moment for all our employees. It reassures our Board of Directors, our funders and our clients that we measure up.

Benefits of accreditation

- Continuous quality improvement
- Reassurance of quality to funding organizations, board, clients and community
- Access to international network of knowledge
- Employee and board pride and sense of accomplishment

Advice about accreditation

Much that is learned through the accreditation process would not be available to us from other sources. CARF holds us accountable through a positive, supportive process. We are proud to be a CARF accredited organization.

Catholic Social Services, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

For almost 30 years, Catholic Social Services has been accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). The program provides accommodation and support services to men and women who are in recovery from substance abuse. Dale D. Peterson, Vice President, Administrative Services, Catholic Social Services, describes the organizations' experience with accreditation.

Catholic Social Services experience with accreditation

In today's ever-changing political and social environments, COA's contextual accreditation has provided us with a way of strengthening, measuring and validating our organizational effectiveness by allowing us to focus on best practice standards in the context of our mission, resources and culture. In this way, COA accreditation standards have provided us with a framework for continuous quality improvement that is customized to reflect our unique corporate identity and our organizational capacity. It also means that everyone in the agency, from executive management to front-line staff, is challenged to actively participate in a process that helps us to measure our organizational effectiveness as well as identify and implement opportunities for improvement.

Becoming re-accredited by COA every four years is not an end in itself, but a means to an end that allows us to more effectively fulfill and validate our unique mission as a Catholic faith-based agency providing social services in a western Canadian context.



4. Tools to Support Accreditation

Ten Common Practices to Support Accreditation

All six of Canada's accreditation bodies offer the following 10 services to facilitate the success of residential treatment facilities in the accreditation process.

Promoting organizational capacity building through:

- Training programs customized to meet the needs of the facility.
- Support for developing effective governance structures and service monitoring and evaluation systems.

Providing access to accreditation resources, tools and networks, such as:

- Websites and online educational resources featuring information about the accreditation process.
- Research demonstrating the impact of the accreditation program on other facilities and their services.
- Case studies and testimonials from similar organizations that have completed the accreditation process.
- Digital and print materials to promote accredited status.
- Opportunities to develop a network with accredited organizations for support throughout the process.

Supporting programs in achieving accreditation with:

- Support personnel within the accreditation body available as a resource to facility staff.
- Standards that are relevant to the context of residential addictions treatment, based on best practices and achievable by organizations of different sizes.
- Independent, third-party reviewers and surveyors who are well trained and skilled, and who understand residential addictions treatment.

Testimonial

Our recent experience of preparing for and receiving our accreditation from the Canadian Centre for Accreditation was both a positive experience and greatly benefitted Renascent. CCA's approach not only assisted us to draw on the experience of others to improve our infrastructure and programs, but also made the whole experience collaborative and positive, supporting staff understanding and participation. Ensuring an organization meets stringent standards is always challenging and can be daunting, and it certainly was for us. The accessibility of the CCA staff supported our organization's hard work in confirming our strengths and addressing needed improvements. The review team, while being highly professional, clearly brought the lived experience of working in the community based program sector, providing an excellent and relevant peer-review experience.

Dennis James, Director of Programs, Renascent Fellowship



Accreditation Training Programs

The following are examples of training programs offered by the accreditation bodies as part of their accreditation process. However, the bodies also offer tailored training programs customized to meet the needs of the facility.

Accreditation Canada

Accreditation Canada offers a number of supports and educational resources for organizations considering accreditation and for those who are enrolled in accreditation with them. Those considering accreditation can take advantage of “Exploring Accreditation Canada” webinars at no cost and offered throughout the year. In addition to the complimentary resources you receive when you join the program, Accreditation Canada’s Learning Centre can bolster your capacity to plan, prepare and engage staff in accreditation, and can connect you with healthcare experts and organizations that are leading quality initiatives across the country. Accreditation Canada’s interactive sessions are presented in a variety of delivery methods to suit all learning needs, from on-site sessions and webinars to self-study manuals and e-learning. For more information, visit their [e-Store \(www.accreditation.ca/educational-materials\)](http://www.accreditation.ca/educational-materials).

In addition to educational resources, Accreditation Canada also offers Advisory Services, a consulting service that links organizations with experts who provide hands-on guidance about quality and safety improvement initiatives. Advisory Services can help with capacity building, pre- or post- survey evaluation and support, and customized services to meet a broad range of goals.

Canadian Accreditation Council

CAC believes in providing your organization with the training crucial to making the accreditation process as easy to understand as possible. CAC has a wide range of training programs designed to help you understand accreditation and provide specialized help with regard to the standards. For a listing of the accreditation-specific support offered, please click through to CAC’s [Standard-Specific Training](http://www.canadianaccreditation.ca/training-center/standard-specific-training/) page (www.canadianaccreditation.ca/training-center/standard-specific-training/)

Training Workshops.

CAC also offers a wide variety of health and human service support workshops, such as first aid and diversity. CAC can host the session at our facility or go to your office, if that is more convenient. To explore the range of assistance available, please visit their [General Training](http://www.canadianaccreditation.ca/training-center/general-training/) page (www.canadianaccreditation.ca/training-center/general-training/).

Canadian Centre for Accreditation

CCA offers a range of supports and training opportunities for participating organizations to help them prepare for accreditation and continue to improve their services and operations. The CCA services described below are included as part of CCA’s annual fees and are provided as a value added at no additional cost to participating organizations.

When an organization signs on with CCA, it is immediately matched with a CCA Accreditation Manager knowledgeable about the organization’s field of service, who is an ongoing consultation resource for the organization throughout the duration of the planning and preparation for their review. In addition, the organization is immediately given access (for as many staff as needed) to the password protected sections of CCA’s website that house a wide range of supportive resources.



Frequently accessed online supports include tools and checklists related to specific accreditation processes (such as formats for conducting file audits); slide decks and tips for developing internal work plans; and an expanding Resource Library with links to sample policies, procedures, guidelines and tools that accredited organizations have agreed to share with the broader community of CCA organizations. As an organization starts out on its preparations, it can also arrange for CCA staff to make in-person, video-conference or web-based presentations to its Board and staff to help everyone learn about the accreditation program and their role in the accreditation review process.

CCA further offers a diverse series of Accreditation Essentials, Process in Focus, and Standards in Focus webinars to participating organizations at different stages of their preparations. The Accreditation Essentials series includes an orientation to all aspects of the accreditation process, including initial planning and self-assessment; managing your preparation and submission in the GoCCA Web Tool; and how to filter, sort and report on standards progress. The Process in Focus series includes specific review-related topics, including CCA stakeholder surveys; the file audit or client journey processes; and preparing the site visit schedule and for the site visit itself. Through its Standards in Focus series, CCA offers webinars on key organizational functions covered in the accreditation standards, for example, quality improvement and planning, strategic versus operational planning, and youth engagement. New and timely sessions are frequently in the development pipeline and personnel from participating organizations have real time access to the upcoming training dates and registration links through their individual GoCCA accounts.

CARF Canada

CARF International offers many training events focused on enhancing quality in health and human services. The web-site calendar displays these events in a filterable, easy-to-use format; see [Events \(www.carf.org/Events\)](http://www.carf.org/Events)

CARF Canada regularly offers performance measurement (outcomes) training, CARF 101s, and 202s. Canada Advanced Performance Measurement training is an interactive three-day training session that takes the mystery out of defining, measuring and reporting the performance and outcomes of an organization's programs and services, helping them apply a quantitative approach to the CARF accreditation standards on performance measurement and performance improvement. CARF 101s provide an introduction to the CARF standards and survey process. They are comprehensive and engaging two-day training sessions designed to help organizations prepare for successful accreditation. CARF 202s are of benefit to organizations that already have accredited programs. They are intensive and dynamic workshops that offer hands-on support in developing or refining the plans and procedures necessary to demonstrate conformance to the CARF standards. Other trainings are also offered. Please see [Download Events and Schedules \(www.carf.org/Events/DownloadEventsSchedules/\)](http://www.carf.org/Events/DownloadEventsSchedules/)

CARF is committed to providing the highest quality education and training opportunities in a format that promotes ease of access and participation. Its web-based trainings allow training in the comfort of an office or home; no travel-related costs; an engaging and interactive format; and the flexibility to have multiple participants on one line. Upon request, CARF will customize accreditation training to suit the organizations' needs. CARF's professional presenters work with all sizes of organizations to develop, plan and deliver customized workshops conducted on-site or via webinar. Topics and presenters are tailored to the organizations' requirements.

A third-party listserv allows service providers interested in CARF Canada accreditation to communicate with one another about all aspects of accreditation. Membership is free of charge. Registration is at groups.yahoo.com/group/carfbc.



Networking with peers is an important aspect of professional education and CARF will, upon request, introduce you to other organizations and individuals in the “CARF family.” CARF Canada staff and your subject matter expert Resource Specialist are available throughout the research, preparatory, pre-survey and after-survey phases of your accreditation journey.

Council on Accreditation

COA is proud to deliver an array of training courses accessible through a variety of formats such as face-to-face, live webinar, recorded webinar, self-paced and customized. These training opportunities provide staff with a hands-on understanding of COA’s accreditation process and the private, public and Canadian standards; how to document implementation, complete the self-study, prepare for the site visit and more.

Use the search and filter feature on the training calendar located on the [COA website \(www.coanet.org\)](http://www.coanet.org) to find all relevant trainings appropriate for your program in the format of your choice. COA recommends searching by training type (i.e., face-to-face, webinar, recorded webinar or self-paced).

In addition to these general training opportunities, COA offers customized technical assistance designed for organizations to address specific needs related to COA accreditation and re-accreditation process. COA can also deliver any of its trainings face-to-face at your organization for a fee. Please contact COA for more information about technical assistance and customized training.

For more information about COA training opportunities and to register please visit www.COAnet.org or contact Danielle Cook, Senior Training and Technical Assistant Coordinator, at dcook@coanet.org.



Choosing an Accreditation Program: A Checklist

Which accreditation program is the right fit for my organization? This question is commonly expressed by treatment facilities across the country. While the accreditation process might initially seem daunting, selecting the right program is an important first step for success.

Each of the accreditation programs offers different standards, and there is no single body that is suitable for every treatment facility. The following components are important to consider in your decision to become accredited with a specific body.

✓	Recognition	Ensure the accrediting body is recognized by your provincial or national government.
✓	Standards	Verify that the accreditation program standards are based on peer-reviewed research and are regularly updated to reflect new evidence.
✓	Processes	Read through the accreditation program's processes to ensure they are feasible for your staff and facility.
✓	Available Support	Consult facilities that have been accredited by different bodies to ensure they were well supported throughout the review process and continue to be supported today.
✓	Sensitivity to Local Cultural Contexts	Ensure that the accreditation program addresses the cultural needs of your clients and that the program offers materials in French or other languages, if required.
✓	Relationship Management	Reach out to the representative of the accreditation body you may be interested in working with. Ensure that this individual understands the needs of your facility, staff and clients, and that he or she can be flexible with any specific needs you may have. It is critical to your success to have a positive working relationship with your accrediting body.



For More Information

For further detail about CCSA, CECA or the Accreditation Stakeholders Working Group, please contact:

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 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
 Co-Chair, Accreditation Stakeholders Working Group
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For more information about accreditation programs or to contact any of the bodies directly, please consult their respective website:



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Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who are the accreditation bodies in Canada?

Accreditation Canada is an independent, not-for-profit organization that has been improving health quality through accreditation since 1958. We accredit more than 1,100 organizations representing over 6,000 sites and services across Canada. These are the organizations you count on to provide safe, quality health care – community health programs, home care services, mental health and addictions services, long-term care homes, emergency medical services, hospitals, walk-in clinics and labs, among others.

We offer a two-step approach to accreditation that begins with the Accreditation Primer program, a unique introductory program that leads to a two-year accreditation award. It is followed by Qmentum, the full four-year accreditation program used to assess your organization for governance, leadership, and service delivery. Connect with us at LearnMore@accreditation.ca or 1-800-814-7769 x 317.

The **Canadian Accreditation Council** traces its origin to 1967 with the formation of the Alberta Association of Child Care Centres, later renamed the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF). In 1974 AASCF initiated a standards development project— the Standards for Child Care. The first accreditation was done in 1987 and shortly afterwards Alberta Children’s Services joined with AASCF to accredit all residential programs funded by that ministry. CAC was formed in 2004, separating from AASCF. From the beginning, CAC has had a primary focus on child and family service residential programs. CAC did not start operating outside Alberta until 2010.

The **Canadian Centre for Accreditation** was formed on April 1, 2012, when the accreditation programs of five community service provider associations (Children’s Mental Health Ontario, Association of Ontario Health Centres, Credit Counselling Ontario/Canada, Family Service Ontario and the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies) were brought together to create a new and independent non-profit accreditation body for community-based services. CCA is building on the foundation of over 100 years of experience of these associations to provide a credible and responsive third-party accreditation program specially geared to community-based health and social service organizations. CCA serves an increasing number of organizations across Canada and is continuously developing new standards and expanding the diversity of sectors it serves. In addition to the sectors of the five founding members, CCA’s most recent expansion has included the review and introduction of new standards related to community mental health and addiction services, services for Aboriginal people, youth justice and community-based support services.

CARF was formed in 1966 by two US national organizations – the Association of Rehabilitation Centers (ARC) and the National Association of Sheltered Workshops and Homebound Programs (NASWHP). The first Canadian agency was accredited in 1969. CARF Canada has staffed offices in Toronto and Edmonton, and accredits organizations in all 10 provinces and the Yukon. CARF accredits in the areas of aging services, behavioural health, child and youth services, employment and community services, medical rehabilitation, vision rehabilitation, and business and service management networks. CARF has 50,000 programs accredited in 19 countries with 65% of the organizations accredited having less than 50 employees.

The **Council on Accreditation** was founded in 1977 by the Child Welfare League of America and Family Service America. Its original focus was the accreditation of family and children’s agencies. COA has expanded its reach over the years and now covers 48 service areas. These areas include substance abuse treatment, crisis response, adult day care, services for the homeless and others.



COA has operated in Canada since its inception, but Canadian Standards were first published in 2008. No COA staff members are currently based in Canada.

The **Conseil québécois d'agrément** was formed in 1995. It is an independent organization with its own board of directors. Its primary focus has been on the accreditation and certification of health and social services agencies and programs. 2010 legislation made certification for private residential substance abuse programs mandatory in Quebec. The Conseil also holds the certification mandate.

Q: It is my organization's first time being accredited. How long will the accreditation process take?

Each accreditation body is different, as is every organization or program being accredited. Depending on the capacity of the organization, the accreditation process usually runs from 12 to 24 months. It is important though that facilities take advantage of the resources and supports made available to them by the accrediting bodies and that they do not try to rush through the accreditation process.

Q: What are the costs to become accredited?

Costs vary based on the size of the organization and the types of services provided. Please contact the respective accreditation bodies to determine which program is the right fit for your organization.

Q: How are accreditation and certification different?

Accreditation is a process that evaluates whether an organization or program meets a set of quality standards in the provision of specific services. Unlike certification, which assesses individuals employed in a given field, accreditation evaluates standards at the organizational or program level.