



# **Certification of Conformance with GHA COVID-19 Guidelines for Medical Travel Programs**

# Overview

As travel restrictions begin to ease, patients will seek healthcare organizations that can demonstrate how they are mitigating the risk of COVID-19 infection throughout the patient journey including travel, transportation and hotel stay. The Certification of Conformance with GHA COVID-19 Guidelines demonstrates to patients, buyers and other key stakeholders that a medical travel program's (located within a hospital or ambulatory center) operational protocols, practices and procedures have undergone an external review and reflect international best practices designed to keep traveling patients safe as operations resume during or post COVID-19.

At a dynamic time, with surges and new findings still evolving, the guidelines are designed to assist medical travel programs to keep current with new developments as they operate within a 'new normal', with a philosophy of risk mitigation along the entire medical travel care continuum, including pre-arrival, travel, accommodations, admission and treatment, discharge and follow up home. The Certification of Conformance also includes a 2 hour online training on the guidelines which is available to all employees of a hospital or ambulatory center, especially for staff working in the medical travel program.

Hospitals or ambulatory centers that purchase the Certification of Conformance will receive a special username and password to access the training.



# Benefits



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## **Confidence and Trust**

Provide a third-party external validation that your medical travel program has effective systems, work processes and protocols in place to mitigate risk, facilitating the confidence and trust of patients, buyers and key stakeholders.



## **Communication with Patients**

Facilitate transparency with patients by communicating appropriate and specific protocols for travel and accommodation prior to and post travel, as well as during admission and treatment, including testing and visitor guidelines.



## **Education and Training**

Educate and train medical travel program staff by providing guidance on work protocols, processes and systems designed to mitigate risk and facilitate safety, along the entire care continuum, including pre-arrival, travel, admission, treatment and post discharge.



## **Accommodation & Hospitality Protocols**

Assures accommodation and hospitality follow internationally recognized guidelines for sanitation and safety.



# Eligibility

## Eligibility Requirements for Certification of Conformance with GHA Covid-19 Guidelines:

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### Hospitals or ambulatory centers eligible must meet the following requirements:

- The hospital or ambulatory center is currently licensed by relevant regulatory agencies to operate and provide patient services.
- The hospital or ambulatory center has a formal medical travel program (also known as an international patient department or office).





# Process

The Certification process includes the following steps:



1. Application and Payment



2. Complete Online Readiness Assessment



3. Submit Requested Documentation



4. Validation Call will be Scheduled



5. Certification will be Awarded

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## **Application and Payment**

- a. We recommend reviewing the Eligibility Requirements and Readiness Assessment before submitting your application and payment to ensure you have the necessary protocols in place or are planning to develop them.
- b. During the application process you will be asked to confirm if your organization has a medical travel program (international patient services office). This criterion must be met to proceed with the certification process.
- c. After completing the application and payment, you will receive an email with access to the complimentary Training on the COVID-19 Guidelines which is included in the Certification. This training is available for all staff in your organization. The training is not mandatory to complete the Certification, but it is encouraged to help facilitate an understanding of the Guidelines and Certification process.
- d. You will receive a second email with information and access to the Online Readiness Assessment and a secure GHA portal that will be used for communication purposes and to upload information.

## **Complete Online Readiness Assessment**

- a. This is an online tool that aligns closely with the Guidelines. The answers will be submitted automatically to GHA; however, their primary purpose is for you to verify if you have all the protocols in place before proceeding to submit the requested documentation.

## **Submit Requested Documentation**

- a. To validate compliance with the Guidelines, GHA will request certain documents or links to information. This information should be submitted by your organization through the secure GHA portal within 60 days of your application.

## **Validation Call will be Scheduled**

- a. Once the documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the GHA staff, a call will be scheduled to review and discuss the information that was submitted.

## **Certification will be Awarded**

- a. GHA will review the information from the documentation and the call to issue a score and Certification Decision.
- b. During the Virtual Validation Interview, organizations will be informed of any area of noncompliance and can have an additional period of 60 days to reach compliance, with the Certification being awarded within the two-month period.
- c. The Certification is valid for 3 years; however, there will be an annual review to discuss any updates to the guidelines and requested documentation, necessitated by changing conditions related to COVID-19.

\*The timeframe to complete steps 1-5 can be as short as two weeks - depending on your organization's readiness and the time necessary to gather and submit the necessary documentation (as well as GHA's availability). It is anticipated that the average time from Application to Certification decision should not take more than 4 weeks. The time limit to submit the necessary documentation is 90 days from the application date.



# FAQ

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## Who developed the GHA Guidelines for Medical Travel Programs?

The Guidelines were developed by the Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) Program for Medical Travel Services with input from various stakeholders including international healthcare providers and other healthcare experts.

In addition to relevant GHA standards, GHA utilized recognized authoritative sources with expertise on infectious disease management and other related areas of expertise.

### *These included:*

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Centers for Disease Prevention & Control (CDC).
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Recommendations Re-opening Facilities to Provide Non-emergent Non-COVID-19 Healthcare: Phase 1
- American College of Surgeons. Joint Statement: Roadmap for Resuming Elective Surgery after COVID-19 Pandemic. (April 2020)
- Planetree: Person-Centered Guidelines for Preserving Family Presence in Challenging Times:
- Global Biorisk Advisory Council

## Who can obtain the Certification of Conformance?

The Certification of Conformance is for hospitals and ambulatory centers (such as dental clinics) with a formal medical travel program (also known as an international department) with one or more persons accountable for the program.

## **What benefits will the Certification of Conformance provide to our organization?**

GHA's Certification of Compliance with COVID-19 Guidelines will:

- Provide a third-party external validation that your medical travel program has effective systems, work processes and protocols in place to mitigate risk, facilitating the confidence and trust of patients, buyers and key stakeholders.
- Facilitate transparency with patients by communicating appropriate and specific protocols for travel and accommodation prior to and post travel, as well as during admission and treatment, including testing and visitor guidelines.
- Assure hotels accommodating your medical travel patients follow internationally recognized guidelines for sanitation and safety.
- Educate and train medical travel program staff by providing guidance on work protocols, processes and systems designed to mitigate risk and facilitate safety, along the entire care continuum, including pre-arrival, travel, admission, treatment and post discharge.

## **How will the Certification of Conformance benefit our patients?**

- Assures patients that the Medical Travel Program has received a third-party external validation against international best practices and relevant GHA standards and that they have effective systems in place to mitigate the risk of COVID-19.
- Assists patients to understand and use appropriate protocols for travel and accommodation prior to and post travel, as well as during admission and treatment.
- Promotes transparency when medical travel programs communicate special safety protocols to patients, such as:
  - COVID-19 pre-screening and testing policies for patients and accompanying family or individuals.
  - The potential need for postoperative or post treatment COVID-19 testing.
  - Protocols to follow in the event that you or a companion test positive for COVID-19, including scenarios such as transfer to an Emergency Room, a local public health authority, quarantine or return home.
  - Use of telemedicine or telehealth for pre-screening, testing, or monitoring while the patient is recovering offsite (such as at a hotel) to avoid unneeded interactions.
  - Any necessary quarantine requirements after travel and before treatment based on local country requirements.

- Revised Family /Visitor/Companion guidelines and whether any restrictions or safety protocols are in place due the risk of contagion.
- Special protocols in place for sanitation and disinfection of the organization's facility
- Provides assurance and peace of mind that recommended hotels comply with recognized industry-wide hotel cleaning and sanitation standards required by COVID-19. These include enhanced hotel cleaning, sanitation and infection prevention practices, social interactions, and workplace protocols to mitigate risk and meet the new health and safety challenges and expectations presented by COVID-19.
- Helps educate and train the organization's staff, by providing guidance on work protocols.

## **How long is the Certification of Conformance valid?**

The Certification valid for 3 years, with annual reviews scheduled in between.

## **How much does the Certification of Conformance cost?**

The cost of the Certification is \$1,950.00 USD for in-patient hospitals and \$1,250 USD for ambulatory centers. There is also a \$300/\$250 annual renewal fee paid at the end of the first and second years, where a call and/or documents may need to be submitted depending on the latest conditions related to COVID-19. Payment can be made via Credit Card or Wire Transfer.

## **How long does it take to achieve the Certification of Conformance?**

It is anticipated that the timeframe for completion should be 3-6 weeks depending on the level of preparedness of the organization. It is unlikely the Certification would take most organizations more than 8 weeks.

## **What are the benefits of the Training on the GHA COVID-19 Guidelines for Medical Travel Programs?**

The training will help your staff gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 guidelines, their rationale and how they fit within the Certification process. The training is presented in a 2 hour video that provides a detailed overview of the COVID-19 Guidelines across the entire medical travel care continuum, including considerations, practical examples and connection to the GHA standards.

## **Who should take the training?**

The training is available for all hospital or clinic staff, but it is especially relevant for leadership and staff working in the medical travel program.



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# About GHA

Founded in 2016, the Global Healthcare Accreditation for Medical Travel Services is independent accrediting body that received ISQua accreditation in 2019.

GHA's international standards and professional norms for medical travel have been developed in consultation with leading global experts in the industry, including providers, insurers and employers committed to establish best practices in medical travel, which support healthcare providers in validating quality and patient experience, increasing visibility, and implementing a sustainable business model for providers along the entire medical travel care continuum.

GHA encompasses accreditation, certification, training and advisory services for:

- Hospitals
- Ambulatory centers
- Hotels
- Individuals

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**Begin the Certification of Conformance Process →**

**Contact GHA for any questions  
you might have about the  
certification or training**



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