

## **GHA Standards Development Plan**

---

### **Overview**

Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) standards are written following a systematic and objective review of scientific literature, ongoing and formal input from provider organizations and key stakeholders, including insurers and employers, experts in patient experience, surveyors, client organizations and experts in medical tourism. Additionally, a formal field review regarding major revisions is conducted every three years, with requested input from the diverse stakeholder groups noted above. Each standard is part of a comprehensive framework that creates awareness towards meaningful management and quantifiable performance regarding medical travel or international patient services in order for organizations to improve over time. GHA Standards focus on the entire medical travel care continuum and specifically how the implementation of certain protocols and processes in each face of the continuum contribute to an overall safe, high quality medical travel experience. GHA accredits only those organizations which have already achieved clinical accreditation, and GHA has purposefully not developed redundant in-depth clinical standards. Rather, the standards are written and organized/grouped to encompass three core competencies:

- Patient-Focused Clinical Processes
- Patient Experience
- Sustainable Business Practices

The core competencies in turn have been written to reflect the perspective of the medical travel patient. Thus, in proposing care management standards, the unique impact on the medical travel patient is the focus (e.g., what can the organization do to mitigate the risk of the medical travel patient bringing emergent infectious agents into the hospital, and what can be done to mitigate the risk of the patient from bringing infections from the hospital back to the country of origin). GHA Standards have been designed in a manner that considers various economics of scale, consumer expectations, cultural differences and stages of development for health systems.

**Amended July 2020; April 2022; February 2023**  
**Standards Development Process:**

**Objectives:**

- To maintain a set of challenging yet attainable and affordable contemporary standards for medical travel services that may serve as professional norms and “good practices” in this evolving field.
- To complement existing national and international clinical accreditation programs, and not be redundant with their standards
- To complement established international authorities (such as WHO, CDC etc., in requirements to avoid redundancy and burdensome costs.
- To conduct a deep review of the International or Global Patient Services program, or the entity within an organization that serves the medical travel patient
- To evaluate compliance towards competencies that ensure a healthcare organization is not only monitoring its overall performance in the services provided to medical travel, medical tourism or international patients but that the entire medical travel care continuum is designed to ensure an overall positive patient engagement experience.
- To enhance Patient Experience through the integration of Medical, Hospitality and Patient Engagement.
- To monitor and improve performance through Measurement and Benchmarking.
- To enhance a sustainable business model through the accreditation process.

Global Healthcare Accreditation Standards for Medical Travel Services are developed with input from medical travel and international patient service professionals, clinicians, patients, subject matter experts, insurers and employers, and diverse multiple stakeholder groups, following the completion of an environmental scan of the literature and scientific evidence supporting medical travel.

## Resources

GHA Standards are developed and reviewed by the GHA Standards Development Committee and approved by the GHA's Chief Executive Officer with new editions of standards being published every three (3) years. Members of the GHA Standards Development Committee are appointed by the GHA CEO and include:

Chairman, Standards Committee  
Director, Clinical Operations  
Director of Business Development & Marketing  
Chief Executive Officer  
International Members

The Chair of the Standards Committee has primary responsibility for the writing of the standards, while the other members of the Committee may assist with environmental scans and compilation of feedback of field reviews or recommendations from other groups (e.g. surveyors and clients). Following any minor change or revision that may need to be incorporated into existing standards due to new scientific evidence or experience, a formal announcement will be made to all clients, prospective consumers and surveyors (and trained) when required. In general, new standards are incorporated if they relate to the medical travel cycle and have a new or added positive impact to standards that already exist.

## Timeframe

The formal standards development process which supports the revision of standards every three years includes the following steps:

- **The Standards Development Committee has responsibility for the development of the standards, while Global Healthcare Accreditation's Chief Executive Officer approves the accreditation standards, including their effective date.** The Standards Development Committee is composed of various profiles across the medical travel industry, including health care professionals, experts in medical travel and patient experience, and national accrediting bodies.

- Emerging competencies or trends suggesting the need for additional or modified standards are tracked and provided to the Standards Development Committee for consideration into the standards. This includes ongoing feedback and input from clients, stakeholders, and surveyors as well as the satisfaction survey following the completion of each survey. The Standards Development Committee shall meet at least semi-annually to review and monitor feedback.
  - Additionally, feedback from meetings or webinars (both in person and virtual) with professional stakeholder groups (both public and private) , and others is also tracked with comments provided to the Standards Development Committee.
  - From time to time, the exact nature of the standards revision may require the appointment of an external expert panel for review and insight into a proposed standard. Care will be taken to ensure appropriate regional representation from the major regions of the world, as well as appropriate diverse stakeholder representation. Recommendations of the expert panel would be made to the Standards Development Committee.
  - The draft standards are distributed internally for review by our surveyors and clients for discussion and formal comments via a survey form. Additionally, a formal field review is conducted which encourages input and feedback from all sectors of the globe and all types of stakeholders. The field review is announced through various mechanisms:
    - Website
    - GHA Newsletter
    - Social Media Platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
    - Mailings to other databases as available (Medical Tourism Association, Insurers, Academic Hospitals, etc.)
    - Regional Representatives and professional societies
  - Based on these inputs, the draft standards are revised by the Standards Development Committee and submitted to Global Healthcare Accreditation's Chief Executive Officer for approval.
- The survey process is enhanced, as needed, to address the new standards requirements, and surveyors are educated about how to assess compliance with the new standards. New resources are developed to support surveyors and clients. Additionally, clients are provided information about the new standards, and training classes are developed for both surveyors and clients.

- ☐ The approved standards are published for use by the medical travel and international patient services industry.
- ☐ Once a standard is in effect, ongoing feedback is solicited and obtained for the purpose of continuous improvement via verbal, written and digital channels of communication.

## **Standards Manuals**

The GHA Standards manual, GHA Survey Process Guide and other supporting resources are provided in digital form to all accredited organizations. Training is provided to clients and surveyors respecting new or revised standards.

## **Implementation of Standards**

The implementation of revised GHA standards is as follows once a new edition is published:

- ☐ Upon approval of a full revision of GHA standards, the GHA will communicate to the public and accredited facilities when “changes will go in effect”.
- ☐ Accredited facilities will be subject to compliance with the most recently published and active set of GHA standards on the date the accreditation site visit and/or re-accreditation site visit is scheduled.