



The Symbol of Quality

COA COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION

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THE IMPACT OF ACCREDITATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING AND PERFORMANCE

RESEARCH PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council on Accreditation (COA) engaged in an exploratory research project, funded by the Aspen Institute, to study the *Impact of Accreditation on Organizational Performance*. COA is a not-for-profit, nationally recognized, accreditor of behavioral healthcare, social service, employee assistance and financial management/debt counseling services. This research is timely in an environment in which funding bodies and regulators are placing an increased emphasis on quality and outcomes measurement. Accreditation has been mandated in several states/provinces (and in some fields by the federal government) as one method to ensure that organizations are providing quality services. Given the emphasis that has been placed on accreditation, research on its effectiveness is essential.

This project used a matched subjects design to compare three accredited organizations to three non-accredited organizations. Based on the exploratory nature of this project, randomized assignment was not feasible. Researchers used characteristics such as accreditation status, budget size, geographic location, and type of service to match participant organizations. Researchers developed and utilized a questionnaire and an on-site data collection tool to gather data on participant organizations.

Three areas of organizational activities suggested a difference among accredited and non-accredited organizations: risk management practices, performance evaluation, and corrective action processes. Other activities studied: internal quality monitoring, stakeholder participation, case record review, outcomes measurement, feedback mechanisms, consumer satisfaction, personnel satisfaction, and other service-specific process, did not demonstrate a difference among participant organizations. Given the small number of participants in this study, it was difficult to determine a significant difference in most indicators.

Research on the impact and the effectiveness of accreditation is increasingly important and needed. To date, very little research has been done in this area. With a growing dependence on indicators of quality by funding bodies, organizations rely on processes such as accreditation to maintain funding and service delivery. Research on the process of accreditation will not only increase its value and use, but will also be instrumental in improving the accreditation process itself.

For more information or a copy of the complete report, please contact Alexis Cohen at (866)-COA-8088 or via email at acohen@coanet.org.