

Report to the National Council of Leaders

January 2017

At its meeting in May 2016, the ACA Board voted to accept the report of the Accreditation Task Force and the recommendations contained therein.

The Accreditation Task Force was charged with the following:  *Determine how the ACA Accreditation Program and process can be more open and appropriate for a variety of groups without sacrificing the goals, intent, and integrity resulting in a more universal and flexible enterprise.*

**Process:**

Provided with background documents from volunteer and staff leadership, including the past work of the National Standards Commission (including working groups it commissioned around specific challenges), Accreditation and Education Task Force, as well as new documents focused on developing audiences and opportunities, the Task Force completed a rapid study phase. Each member contributed their unique and informed perspective via remote meetings and an in-person gathering led by Chair, Jody Oates. Four, complementary recommendations were developed with the charge squarely in front of the group.

**Recommendations:**

**1. Develop a foundation of both accreditation standards and definitions that apply to all programs to be accredited, as well as develop modules for each program types (such as resident, day, campus-related programs, or others).**

**Key aspects to be addressed include:**

* *Reduction of the redundancy in standards*
* *An APG and standards that serve the diversity of camps we see now as well as those we anticipate in the future*
* *Reduce the actual number of standards (those that are met 100% of the time, do not address health, safety, risk management, etc.).*
* *And increase the integrity of the program, promote growth, and increase satisfaction*

2.  **Define a growth strategy for colleges and universities that either host or house camp programs on their campuses. The strategy will include further development of the recently formed Affinity Group within ACA known as Camps on Campus.**

*The concept of the growth strategy includes, but is not limited to those who join the affinity group.  It’s about developing a business strategy to approach the market in general, with the affinity group/membership platform as a vehicle.*

**3. Utilize technology and other strategies to support the work of the Visitor program.**

*In addition to identifying technology solutions to support the Visitor program, a comprehensive program of training, support, continuing education and accountability should be developed to enhance the standards volunteer experience and improve the quality of the accreditation program overall.  Such efforts will also help attract and retain volunteers because of the added value to their professional education.*

**4. Explore ways to incorporate program quality into the accreditation process.**

*As we consider additional ways by which ACA can assist in helping camps “raise the bar” on program quality, methods that promote a culture of continuous and intentional improvement might be incorporated into the ACA standards and the Annual Accreditation Report (AAR).*

***Where we are now***

ACA staff and the National Standards Commission have reviewed the four recommendations and have established a **draft** timeline and ***goal*** tasks to be accomplished by specified dates for key steps in the process. It has been determined that the four recommendations might have different yet intersecting timelines.

**NOTE:** Text in ***bold italics*** are actions that have occurred since October 2016.

*By July 2017 – Building the Framework*

* Draft modules of the APG developed. This work includes identifying the “core” standards and considers the various types of camps/program.
  + ***The NSC has met via conference call during the fall/early winter as they work to define and identify core standards, identify standard to delete/combine, and discuss what “sections of standards” should be in a new model. This work will continue throughout the winter.***
  + Pilot test some of the sections of standards during 2017 visit season
* Types of technology to be used identified. Includes identifying related costs. ***Initial conversations have been held to determine types, needs, feasibility.***
* Work groups will complete work or will have work in progress.
  + Camps on campus discussion specific to standards. *In progress.* ***Members of the NSC have held 1:1 conversations with individuals from major universities who have expressed interest in ACA accreditation yet have voiced concern. What is learned will help inform standards, applicability and administration of the program.***
  + Camps on campus business plan discussion. ***ACA staff have initiated the development of a business plan for the Camps on Campus group. Part of this includes an inventory of ACA accredited programs that occur on a university campus (either operated by the university or where the program rents university as a facility), determining the potential number of camps that might become ACA accredited, and initial discussion regarding the fee structure. An ACA Affinity Group has been formed with a steering committee comprised of several individuals from the Camps on Campus Communities. They will be hosting a “pre-conference” at the ACA National Conference in February 2017.***
  + Administration of visits consideration. How does a visit look and what components are necessary, beneficial, and so on? How many ways can a visit look? ***A small work group comprised of staff and volunteers have started the initial identification of “unintentional barriers” that occur based on how things are the program is administered (training, reviewing of written documentation, scoring, visits). Additional work is necessary to address if and how these barriers might be mitigated while we maintain the rigor and integrity of the program.***
  + Focus groups representative of the various types of camps (camps lasting 5 days or less, day camps, resident camps, travel camps, those that serve special populations, all volunteer run, those that rent from others, etc.) held. ***The NSC will have a very basic framework of a revised accreditation model to which these groups to react at the ACA National Conference. The groups are in the process of being identified.***
  + Input requested from outside entities as appropriate and beneficial.
* Any additional work groups identified with tasks assigned. ***The NSC is in the process of identifying additional groups.***
* Discussion held with the state regulators in those states that recognized ACA standards as deemed status to determine impact of proposed changes.
* Visitor quality improvement components outlined and timeline established. ***The report of the “Visitor Quality” workgroup from 2014 has been reviewed. A timeline to implement many of these recommendations is being developed and with initial ideas being implement in spring 2017.*** 
  + Types of training necessary?
  + How/when offered?

*By August 2018 – Release of New Accreditation Program and All Components*

* APG with modules for all audiences
* Technology in place and tested
  + New My Accreditation online tool
  + Additional resources to support visitor and promote quality and integrity
* Any changes to administration of visits complete and implemented
* Any changes to ACA fee structure phased in with appropriate groups
* Camp and visitor training components complete and implementation begun
* Technology enhancements for training identified and being introduced as possible

**Future Discussion Items**

Inclusion of the program quality component in the ACA accreditation process