

How we work with you

– The certification process explained

IHCA Certification is accredited by the Joint Accreditation Scheme of Australia and New Zealand (JASANZ) to certify health and human services organisations under a wide range of schemes. This document explains how the certification process works, from the time you first make an enquiry.

The information included in this document explains the processes for granting, refusing, maintaining, renewing, suspending, withdrawing or changing the scope of certification.

1 Initial enquiry

In the first instance, you can contact us by phone (07 3844 2222) or by email certification@ihcac.com.au. Our team will ask you some questions about the scheme or scheme/s you are interested in and your organisation and they will provide you with information about the certification process. To ensure we fully understand your requirements we will ask you to complete an application form, telling us information about your organisation. This will include the types of services you offer, the locations you deliver services from, your employees and service users.

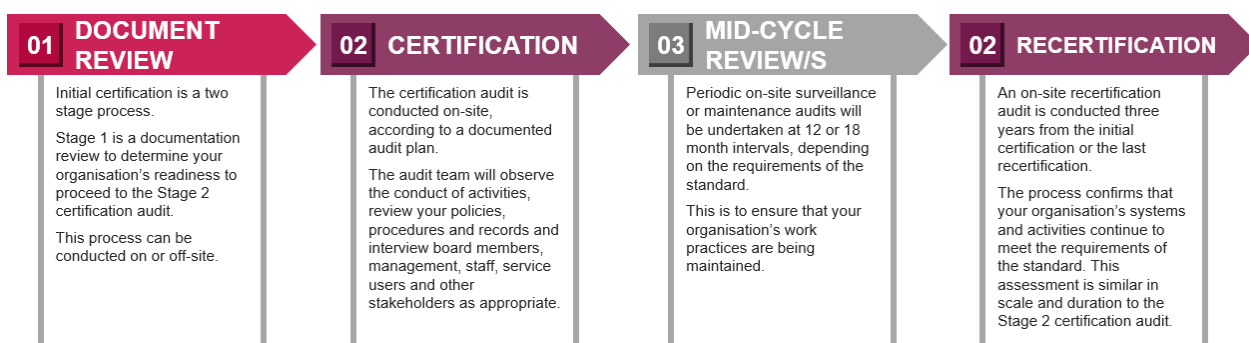
2 Certification proposal and service agreement

On receiving the completed organisational details from you, our team will develop a proposal to conduct the certification assessments. When you have considered the proposal and agreed to commit to the certification, we will issue you a service agreement. This is a formal contract between your organisation and IHCA Certification Pty Ltd. It outlines your acceptance of the certification process, the rules governing certification and certification marks, appeals and contractual terms and conditions. The service agreement covers the period of certification.

3 Certification process overview

This diagram is a basic overview of the certification cycle.

Diagram 1 Certification process overview



4 Phases of the certification program

IHCA Certification's purpose in providing certification services is to support health, community and support services organisations to continuously improve. Our experienced assessors apply nationally and internationally endorsed methodology, supporting better practice service delivery and professionalism.

Initial certification involves a two-stage process: a documentation review and certification assessment. In some cases, a gap analysis may be conducted prior to the Stage 1 process.

Stage 1 Assessment (review of organisational documentation)

The Stage 1 assessment involves a review of documentation by the assessment team to determine your organisation's readiness to proceed to the Stage 2 certification assessment. Your organisation will be provided with advice on areas of potential nonconformity with the standard that should be addressed prior to the Stage 2 assessment. The process will be conducted on or off-site.

When the lead assessor has confirmed that your organisation's documentation is complete, the planned dates for the Stage 2 assessment will be confirmed.

Stage 2 Assessment (on-site certification assessment)

The on-site certification assessment will be conducted according to a documented assessment plan, which will be developed in consultation with your organisation.

The assessment team will verify your organisational work practices by reviewing your policies, procedures and records. The team will interview board members, management, staff, service users and other stakeholders as appropriate. Throughout the assessment, the assessment team will observe the conduct of organisational activities.

For organisations that operate across a number of sites, the sites to be visited will be agreed prior to the commencement of the Stage 2 assessment.

At the conclusion of the on-site assessment the assessment team will present its findings to your organisation's management and other interested parties (e.g., staff and service users), in relation to conformity with the standard's requirements.

Note that in order to demonstrate IHCA Certification's compliance with the standards it is accredited to, from time to time we may advise you that an assessor from our accreditation body (JASANZ) will observe an assessment team's conduct of your assessment. Similarly, we may also monitor the performance of our assessment team members. We will provide you with advance notice of these observations and assessments, which occur at no cost to you.

Corrective action planning

Where nonconformity is identified, your organisation will need to develop a corrective action plan before being eligible for certification. In some instances, corrective action will need to be completed before certification can proceed. The lead assessor will advise your organisation on the timeframes for corrective action at the closing meeting of the assessment.

The lead assessor will explain what follow-up action is required to 'close out' on any nonconformity. In most cases, any nonconformity may be 'closed out' by your organisation through providing evidence of actions taken within the required timeframe. However, should an onsite visit be necessary to verify the effectiveness of corrective action taken, this will be charged at the hourly assessor rate in accordance with the fee schedule applying at the time.

Follow-up assessment

A follow-up assessment may be required for several reasons:

- significant nonconformities identified in the certification assessment requiring improvements to meet scheme requirements;
- substantial changes within the organisation;
- a complaint or breach has been reported to IHCA Certification or a related stakeholder;
- the integrity or compliance of your service delivery system needs to be verified;
- the scope of certification is to be extended;
- a change in the certification standard or requirements.
- The duration of a follow-up assessment will be determined by the scheme requirements. We will discuss this with you.

In some circumstances it may be necessary for IHCA Certification to conduct a follow-up assessment at short notice. This may be necessary to investigate complaints, in response to changes, or as a follow-up after suspension.

Follow-up and short notice assessments are not included in IHCA Certification's service agreement and will be charged at the hourly or daily assessor rate in accordance with the fee schedule applying at the time.

Certification decision and registration

Following the on-site assessment, the assessment team compiles an assessment report, detailing their findings and the reasons for these. The assessment report is technically reviewed prior to a draft report being issued to your organisation for comment on any errors of fact.

IHCA Certification will provide a final written report to your organisation, which will be formally certified against the standard if there are no nonconformities or where corrective action requirements have been met. A copy of the final report may be provided to another external stakeholder or government department if this is a requirement of the scheme.

Upon certification your organisation will be issued with a certificate confirming registration and the right to use IHCA Certification's distinctive symbol in promotional activities.

IHCA Certification will also add your organisation's name to the JASANZ register of certified organisations, which is publicly accessible on the JASANZ website: <https://www.jasanz.org/>.

During the period of certification, generally three years, your organisation must comply with the requirements of the scheme that you are certified under and disclose to IHCA Certification any changes, significant events, and findings of other third parties that may impact the scope and validity of your certification.

Periodic maintenance or surveillance assessments

Periodic on-site maintenance or surveillance assessments will be undertaken every 12 or 18 months (depending on the requirements of the standard). This is to ensure that your organisation's work practices are being maintained and that they are being periodically monitored and reviewed to ensure continuous improvement. A report will be provided to you with feedback regarding the results of these assessments.

Recertification

A comprehensive review of your organisation's service delivery systems and activities is required to be completed three years after the initial certification assessment, or the last recertification assessment.

IHCA Certification will contact you prior to the expiry of your certificate and provide you with the opportunity to renew your service agreement with us. We will then commence planning your recertification assessment. This process is similar to the Stage 2 certification assessment, involving observation of the application of your service delivery systems and process, and interviews with staff, management, board members, service users and other stakeholders.

On achieving recertification, a new Certificate of Registration will be issued and the certification cycle recommences.

5 Refusal of certification

IHCA Certification may deny certification to an organisation if there is evidence of repeated non-conformance with the certification requirements of a scheme or for other reasons that may reflect negatively on the reputation of IHCA Certification.

6 Suspending certification

Suspension of certification refers to invalidating your Certificate of Registration for a period of up to six months. Your organisation's certification may be suspended in instances such as:

- IHCA Certification cannot adequately verify that your management and/or service delivery systems are maintaining compliance with the requirements of the standard;
- Your organisation has failed to rectify an identified nonconformance within the required timeframe;
- Your organisation do not allow IHCA Certification to conduct maintenance and recertification assessments within the required timeframes;
- Your organisation does not comply with our service agreement e.g. fees are not paid within the stated terms, your organisation uses the IHCA Certification mark incorrectly;
- IHCA Certification receives evidence of noncompliance with scheme requirements from an external stakeholder such as the scheme owner;
- Your organisation requests temporary suspension of certification.

IHCA Certification will review all evidence and decide on the action to be taken. If it is determined that suspension is the appropriate course of action, your organisation will be notified of this in writing, along with the action that your organisation will be required to take to restore your certification. Your organisation will be required to provide a written response to this notification within 10 business days.

Restoring your certification may require an on-site assessment to establish that your organisation has completed actions to satisfy compliance with the standard. Should your organisation fail to resolve the suspension issue within the required time, the certificate may be withdrawn or the scope of certification may be reduced.

7 Withdrawal of certification

IHCA Certification may withdraw certification where your organisation fails to meet the conditions of suspension or in the case of severe nonconformance or failure to cooperate, suspension is not an adequate action.

Your organisation will be formally advised of the decision to withdraw certification together with instructions to terminate the use of the IHCA Certification mark and any references to certification in your organisation's promotional material, and to return the certificate and any copies to IHCA Certification.

Should your organisation wish to appeal a decision to withdraw certification, the provisions of IHCA Certification's Appeals Policy apply.

8 Changing the scope of certification

The scope of your organisation's certification may vary from time to time, for example where you take on or cease delivering certain services. Any changes in the nature, size and structure of your organisation must be notified to IHCA Certification within 20 business days.

An increase in scope may require an additional assessment being conducted and re-issuing of the certification. A charge will be applied for this variation to the service agreement. Wherever possible, IHCA Certification will seek to verify scope extensions at the time of planned maintenance or recertification assessments.

If your organisation has failed to meet the certification requirements for parts of the scope of certification, the scope of certification may be reduced to reflect the compliant aspects of your organisation.