



SOUTH CAROLINA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS/INQUIRIES
REGARDING ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

The following is a guide for handling complaints/inquiries received by the SCMA CME Committee which suggest that an accredited provider may not be in compliance with SCMA Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies with regard to one or more of its activities.

- I. To receive formal consideration, all complaints must be submitted in writing and signed.

The statute of limitation of the length of time during which an accredited provider must be accountable for any complaints/inquiries received by the SCMA CME Committee is twelve months from the date of the activity, or in the case of a series, twelve months from the date of the activity which is in question. The length of time for a provider to be accountable for an Enduring Material will be one year past the third year of current review.

- II. The Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will review the complaint/inquiry to determine whether it relates to the manner in which the provider complies with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies.

- A. The confidentiality of the complaining/inquiring party shall be protected.
- B. If the complaint/inquiry is not judged to be related to compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies, the person initiating the complaint will be notified by the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee.
- C. If the complaint/inquiry is judged to be related to compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies, the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will notify the person initiating the complaint of the planned course of action.

- III. If the complaint/inquiry is judged to be related to compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies, the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will send a Letter of Inquiry to the provider via certified mail describing the nature of the complaint/inquiry. The Letter of Inquiry will request a response in which the provider can offer its interpretation of how it complies with the SCMA Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies. The provider's response must be received by the SCMA CME Committee within thirty days after the provider receives the Letter of Inquiry. The provider's response must be accompanied, where possible, by supporting documentation.

- A. If a provider fails to respond to a request for information, the SCMA CME Committee may require an immediate full or focused on-site survey and/or change the provider's accreditation status to probation.
- B. Upon receipt of the provider's response, the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee shall determine whether additional information is necessary and may request such information from the provider. When the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee determines that the information submitted is adequate, one of two courses of action may be taken:

1. The inquiry will be processed by the SCMA Director of Education if, in the opinion of the SCMA Director of Education and the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee, it is of a clear and uncomplicated nature. The Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will review the materials and make a recommendation for action. The recommendation will be included in the agenda for the next SCMA CME Committee meeting for ratification.
2. The inquiry will be sent to two members of the SCMA CME Committee if it is not a clear and uncomplicated issue. Those members will review the materials and communicate one single recommendation in writing to the SCMA Director of Education. The recommendation will be placed on the agenda for the next SCMA CME Committee meeting for discussion.
 - (1) If the two SCMA CME Committee members do not agree on a recommendation, a conference will be held among the reviewers, the SCMA CME Committee chairperson, and the SCMA Director of Education. If consensus is achieved, the recommendation will be presented to the committee for discussion. If no consensus can be achieved, the full committee shall discuss the issue. The SCMA Director of Education will provide a summary report to the committee for this discussion.
 - (2) The members of the review team, the chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee, or the full committee may request additional materials from the provider if they determine that the materials they have are insufficient to allow them to render a decision.

IV. The SCMA CME Committee will make its final decision based on its review. The following are the possible determinations:

A. Notice of Compliance

1. From the documentation submitted, the SCMA CME Committee has determined that the provider appears to be in compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies regarding the issues presented.
2. The information will be filed and the Letter of Inquiry and decision letter to the provider will be included in the next review.

B. Notice of Non-Compliance

1. From the documentation submitted, the SCMA CME Committee has determined that the provider is not in compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies regarding the issues presented.
2. Areas of non-compliance will be enumerated in the decision letter to the provider which, along with the Letter of Inquiry and the provider's response, will be placed in the provider's file and will be made available to the survey team at the next review.
3. The provider will be asked to provide documentation of corrective action to the SCMA CME Committee within thirty days of receipt of the Notice of Non-Compliance, and will be notified that failure to correct the deficiencies may result in an immediate resurvey which may affect the provider's accreditation status.
 - a) The Chairperson for the SCMA CME Committee will review the response to the notice of corrective action for adequacy and will

summarize and present the information to the SCMA CME Committee. If the response is adequate, it will be kept in the provider's file to be included in its next review. If the response is inadequate, the SCMA CME Committee may request additional information or an immediate resurvey and/or change in accreditation status to probation.

b) If a provider fails to respond to a request for a notice of corrective action, the SCMA CME Committee may request an immediate on-site survey and/or change in accreditation status to probation.

4. In addition, the provider may be required to submit a Monitoring Report at a time determined by the SCMA CME Committee, and will be notified that failure to respond or to correct the deficiencies may result in an immediate resurvey which may affect the provider's accreditation status.

a) The Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will review the provider's Monitoring Report and determine its adequacy.

(1) If the Report is adequate, the Chairperson of the SCMA CME Committee will recommend its acceptance. The recommendation will be presented to the SCMA CME Committee for discussion and concurrence. The Report will be kept in the provider's file to be included in its next review.

(2) If the Report is inadequate, the SCMA CME Committee may request additional information or may request an immediate resurvey and/or change in accreditation status to probation.

b) If a provider fails to respond to a request for a Monitoring Report, the SCMA CME Committee may request an immediate on-site survey and/or change in accreditation status to probation.

V. The SCMA CME Committee will intervene by affecting the accreditation status of a provider only when it identifies practices and conditions that indicate that a provider is not in compliance with the Essential Areas, their elements, or accreditation policies.