



Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Burn Center Verification Site Visits

Frequently Asked Questions

The ABA has delayed site visits through the spring and summer of 2020. We are currently evaluating the safety and feasibility of conducting visits in fall 2020. The ABA Verification Committee continues to monitor the rapidly evolving situation and will adjust as necessary.

Re-verification Visits

Is ABA extending verification expiration dates?

Yes, ABA will approve a request for extension of up to 1 year for any center with a site visit impacted by COVID-19 in 2020. This includes both the ability to safely host a site visit, as well as pandemic-related resource limitations that may prevent adequate preparations (i.e. PRQ completion).

At this time, ABA is not offering extensions for verified burn centers with expiration dates in 2021 or 2022. We will continue to monitor the situation and listen to impacted centers, and we may update our policies over time.

Contact us at verification@ameriburn.org to request an extension or discuss your specific circumstances.

Our burn center is due for re-verification in early/mid 2021. Should we begin preparations now, or will our site visit be delayed?

If your center is up for re-verification in Q1-Q2 2021, please submit your application and your verification status will remain in good standing until we can schedule your site visit, regardless of expiration date. The application link is available [on our website](#).

Please keep in mind that as we work to reschedule postponed visits, there may be additional delays in 2021. Furthermore, evolving circumstances during the pandemic may reduce the lead time we are able to provide in scheduling visits.

Can our burn center request more than one extension if circumstances in our region or hospital change?

Yes. The ABA recognizes that local circumstances can change for both the burn center and our site review teams. The ABA will extend your burn center's verification until such time as we are able to safely complete a site review.

Can our burn center request a virtual site visit?

No, ABA does not currently conduct virtual site visits. The Verification Committee highly values in-person conversation to assess the workings of multidisciplinary burn care teams. Furthermore, the detailed chart review process must be conducted at your hospital.

ABA is currently exploring options to adapt the site review agenda and provide a more flexible format during the pandemic. This may involve smaller meetings that adhere to social distancing guidelines, or hybrid virtual and in-person participation for both site surveyors and burn center team members. Additional guidance from the committee is forthcoming.

My hospital or state has restrictions around visitors from out-of-state. Can ABA accommodate this in assigning our reviewers?

Yes, ABA will abide by any health and safety policies established by your hospital, local public health agency, or state department of health. Please provide any relevant policies during the site visit scheduling process. Additional delays are possible, given a limited pool of site surveyors and backlog of site visits.

If our burn center requests a 1-year extension will we need to begin a new PRQ?

If you previously prepared a pre-review questionnaire (PRQ) for a 2020 site visit, the committee will not require a full update. It is the preference of the committee to have at least some updated data from the most recent 12-month period. However, we acknowledge that given resource constraints during the pandemic, this may not be possible at all burn centers.

How will ABA's transition to a new PRQ system and questionnaire impact our site visit?

ABA is planning a transition to a new online pre-review questionnaire (PRQ) system in 2021. **Verification criteria have not changed**, but the Verification Committee has updated the PRQ to elicit different information that will support better preparation for the site visit. For more information about the transition, please see [this page](#).

For any center that had originally planned for a re-verification site visit in 2020, and has had that site visit postponed due to COVID-19, ABA will not require a full update of your PRQ and will not require you to move data to the new questionnaire and online data entry system.

If your original burn center expiration date was in 2020 and you would prefer to update your PRQ, please contact us for more information.

How will delays impact our burn center's verification payment?

In 2020, ABA transitioned to an annual fee structure for the verification program. Instead of paying one fee at the time of the site visit, burn centers now pay a \$5,000 program fee each year. This fee goes towards administrative costs of maintaining the program, scheduling site surveyor visits, and providing ongoing PRQ access within an enhanced verification system (coming in 2021). The annual fee structure also makes for easier hospital budgeting, and allows ABA to automate your invoicing and include any applicable package pricing for burn centers participating in multiple quality programs.

ABA will continue to invoice centers for their annual program fees. There will be no additional charges from ABA related to rescheduling visits or providing extended access to your PRQ.

(New) Verification and Consultation Visits

Is ABA accepting applications for new verification or consultation visits in 2020 or 2021?

If your center is seeking verification either for the first time or following a lapse in verification, or if you are looking to schedule a consultation visit, we recommend planning for Q3 of 2021 to schedule your visit. We anticipate a backlog in re-verification site visits to continue into 2021, which will limit our capacity to conduct consultation visits.

What if our burn center already applied for a site visit in 2020?

Your application is on file and ABA Central Office will contact you about scheduling or delaying your visit, as necessary. All consultation visit payments will be applied to your rescheduled site visit.

Can our burn center request a virtual visit?

No, ABA requires an in-person site visit for new verifications and consultations.