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**Release Date: February 9, 2009**  
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## **NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **HEALTH DIVISION FINALIZES FIRST INFORMATION SHARING AGREEMENT WITH NATIONAL ACCREDITING GROUP**

*Carson City* — The Nevada State Health Division has finalized its first information sharing agreement with a national accrediting group in an effort to improve communication on issues that could jeopardize the public's health.

The memorandum of understanding with The Joint Commission is the first of what is expected to be information sharing arrangements with several national accrediting bodies that review health and medical facilities in Nevada.

The Joint Commission is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies more than 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the U.S., including hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers.

The Health Division embarked on the information sharing effort as a method of early detection of issues or conditions that may exist in medical facilities in Nevada, allowing for the correction of any problems before they become significant public health concerns.

"When we inspected all of the ambulatory surgery centers last year, we identified a gap in the area of information sharing," said Richard Whitley, Health Division Administrator. "This is an important step to ensure that all agencies are sharing information with each other."

Organizations such as The Joint Commission can survey and certify/accredit facilities for participation in the federal Medicare and Medicaid programs, substituting their review process for one performed by the Health Division's Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance.

The agreement will allow The Joint Commission to relay any facility concerns or issues to the Health Division, which in turn can communicate with the organization about any concerns it may discover in its review processes.

Improving communication between national, state and local health agencies and health care providers is one proactive way to protect the public's health. It is an ongoing priority for the Health Division, particularly after the discovery of a hepatitis C outbreak in Southern Nevada last year. The outbreak was traced to infection control issues at the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada.

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A representative of The Joint Commission is scheduled to make a presentation on the accreditation process to members of the Legislature on Wednesday from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. in the Legislative Building, Room 3100.

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