

What We Stand For

The American College of Healthcare Architects is a certification organization with the mission “to distinguish healthcare architects through certification, experience and rigorous standards.” Our vision is “transforming healthcare through better built environments.”

We believe that “better” built environments must address and support a series of fundamental issues and forces impacting human health and the delivery of healthcare. Therefore, we believe that:

Health and healthcare environments should be designed to optimize operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Healthcare organizations are under ever increasing pressures to do more, better, faster, with fewer human and material resources. Therefore, every effort should be made to design healthcare settings that minimize waste, and the time and effort required to accomplish the highest level of care possible in operation and during the project delivery process.

Health and healthcare environments should be designed to protect and optimize safety, health, and health outcomes.

We recognize that patient safety, health outcomes and population health are critical issues for healthcare organizations. Therefore, every effort should be made to create safe and therapeutic environments for patients, staff, and all occupants of the environments we design. This also includes optimizing the health and wellbeing of the communities in which our environments are placed and served by our client organizations. Finally, it demands protecting and optimizing the health of global ecosystems through green, sustainable, regenerative, and ultimately carbon reducing design, construction and operating strategies and practices.

Health and healthcare environments should be designed to optimize the healthcare experience.

This includes addressing the diverse and unique needs of patients, care partners, clinicians, staff and the communities and populations they serve. How the built environment of care is designed can impact patient comfort and satisfaction and care partner engagement which in turn can improve health outcomes and attract informed and insured patients. We also recognize that the design of the built environment can affect staff satisfaction, burnout, and retention. Finally, the planning and design of healthcare settings can influence community support and engagement so healthcare facilities should be designed to be good neighbors and meet community needs beyond delivering healthcare.

Health and healthcare environments should be designed to optimize the ability to accommodate change.

We recognize that how healthcare is delivered will change at an ever-increasing rate over the extended lifespan of facilities we design. Healthcare facilities must be designed to accommodate these evolutionary changes as well as respond nimbly to sudden unpredictable and potentially catastrophic events. Therefore, healthcare environments must be designed for flexibility, adaptability, expandability, and resilience.

Finally, health and healthcare environments must be designed to employ collaborative, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and evidence-based design decision-making processes.

We recognize that delivering better healthcare environments benefits through input from the broadest possible range of sources and stakeholders, representing diverse skills, knowledge, insights, experiences, and perspectives. We believe that the best available evidence should be applied through the lens of an experienced and certified architectural practitioner. We also recognize that we need more rigorous and comprehensive research at the intersection of human health, healthcare and the design of the built environment. Further, the methods and findings of this research area need to be reported as well as translated more easily, quickly and appropriately for implementing an effective design decision making process.

Health and healthcare environments must be designed with knowledge of and in compliance with the best practices, guidelines, standards, and building codes established as an industry standard of care for all healthcare settings. Certified healthcare architects must advocate to protect the health, safety, and welfare of all building occupants within the unique dynamics of healthcare.

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