

# Report from Site Visit for Medical Fitness Facility Certification

Site: HealthFit – Powered by Sarasota Memorial

Location: Sarasota, FL

Visit Date: 2/7/25

Examiner: David Flench



## Introduction

The Medical Fitness Association (MFA) developed the Facility Certification program in 2008 following the publication of the first edition of the *MFA Standards and Guidelines*. This certification program is intended to provide a roadmap for facilities so that when they comply with the standards and guidelines, they should be more effective in providing a safe and effective medical fitness center for the people they serve. Certified medically integrated fitness centers feature the professional expertise and programming necessary to effectively assist people to develop, initiate, and maintain an active lifestyle that minimizes the risk of illness and disease and promotes health and wellness.

## Executive Summary

HealthFit – Powered by Sarasota Memorial initially obtained MFA Facility Certification in December 2016. In September 2024, Doug Sham, HealthFit Manager, applied for recertification to meet the MFA 5-year cycle requirement. Following a successful review of the application documents, a site visit was scheduled to evaluate the facility's compliance with the MFA standards. Digital files showing evidence for each standard were uploaded to an online platform two weeks before the site visit, which I reviewed in advance.

The site visit occurred on February 7, 2025, starting with a meeting with the facility management team, during which I presented the PowerPoint called *MFA Facility Certification*. A tour was then provided of the facility, allowing me to meet additional staff, and observe aspects of safety, systems, equipment, signage, policies, and other features related to the standards. I then conducted a final review of the scoring sheet and examination documents. We concluded the day with the Summation Conference.

Among those present were as follows:

- Dr. Steven Papuchis, Medical Director
- Doug Sham, HealthFit Manager
- Jen Storch, VP of Ambulatory Services
- Steve Stapleton, Membership Supervisor
- James Caron, Director of Outpatient Rehab Services
- Lisa Liddawi, Fitness Center Supervisor

Based on all the findings before and during the site visit, HealthFit has demonstrated excellent compliance with the MFA Standards and Guidelines. This report has also been submitted to the Certification Advisory Panel which has reviewed and approved the recommendations as well. The facility is a terrific example of the medical fitness model in action and should be proud of its commitment to high-quality operations.

### **Congratulations, HealthFit – Powered by Sarasota Memorial has achieved MFA Facility Recertification!**

#### Strengths

HealthFit excels in many of the critical components of the medical fitness model, as well as in other operational factors, specifically in the following areas.

- A strong positive culture exists, with employees noted as friendly, professional, and passionate about their work. Several have been there for over 10 years.
- The fitness staff collaborate closely with the onsite Cardiac Rehabilitation Phase 2 (CR-2) department, a good example of integration with hospital clinical services. The volumes from CR-2 at SMH are the second highest in the nation, so HealthFit's rebranding of its Phase 3 program helps take advantage of this, with many of the CR-2 patients transitioning to HealthFit CR-3.
- The Medical Director is a physiatrist who has been very helpful in developing programs and referring patients.
- HealthFit hosts an annual Parkinson Symposium to bring awareness to many in the community of the variety of services, from the onsite neurology practice to the programming at HealthFit, including Rock Steady Boxing and other programs.
- Physical therapists regularly utilize the fitness floor and warm water pool with their patients and then refer patients into HealthFit programs. Management makes rounds in all of the PT clinics, interacting with the nearly 70 therapists, to build a closer relationship, which helps drive more referrals as well.
- The hospital's Renew program is another HealthFit entry point for community members who want nutrition and health coaching via SMH provider referrals.
- The Fitness Forward program for stroke recovery has all the pillars of a medical fitness/lifestyle medicine model, and also has a scholarship to fund it.
- There is evidence of continuous quality improvement, especially regarding safety and inclusivity aspects, where the management team is focused on listening to feedback from the membership.
- There is a focus on community outreach, with several events in the community and partnerships with local organizations.
- The facility was designed with a high level of integration in the physical building, with many clinical and medical services/departments located within to promote cross-

pollination of patients, members, and the community. Massage services expanded and now occupy a space next to physician offices upstairs, furthering their integration.

- A commitment to maintaining the high quality of the building also is apparent, with recent updates to the natatorium, and planned replacement of fitness equipment to occur soon.

### Standards Not Met

- **#VIII.1.2a and VIII.1.3a. Professional Staffing:** Regarding professional fitness floor staff and personal training staff having degrees in exercise science or a related field.
  - Evidence: Some, but not all, of the staff in these areas have degrees.
  - Recommendation: Look to bring on staff with degrees as new hiring opportunities present themselves, and to support any existing staff in any efforts to obtain a degree in the field.

### Not Applicable Standards

- **#VII.1.2 and VII.2.7. Aquatics:** Regarding supervision of children while they are in aquatics areas.
  - Reason for NA: The facility does not allow children to be members and do not have children programs where they would use the aquatic area.
- **#VII.3.9. Aquatics:** Based on applicable state or local laws or regulations, the aquatic facilities should have lifeguards scheduled appropriately to supervise pool activities.
  - Reason for NA: State laws do not require lifeguards for their pools.

### Suggestions for Enhancement

The following suggestions are made to provide an opportunity to enhance the facility's operations based on the observations during the site visit. The suggestions are derived from professional expertise and experience in operating and examining other similar medical fitness centers. These suggestions are not required, and MFA understands that considerations for each facility's specific situation can dictate the implementation.

It is evident that HealthFit operates within the medical fitness model consistently. Many of the suggestions from the previous site visit have been implemented, and they continue to look for ways to improve on their own. The following represents suggestions for enhancement:

- Continue to develop innovative, new programs to stay relevant within the membership and to integrate even further within the healthcare continuum.
- Continue to reinvest in the building to maintain high-quality operations and customer experience.

- Promote the MFA certification regularly to various stakeholders (administration, medical staff, clinical services, internal staff, facility members, and the general public) to further demonstrate best practice operations and differentiation to other types of local fitness facilities.
- Prioritize opportunities for staff to learn medical fitness concepts through continuing education in formal and informal ways, by attending virtual, regional, and national MFA events to get the most out of this professional association membership.

## Conclusions

HealthFit scored 126 out of 128 (with 3 NAs), with all the pass/fail standards passed, for an overall 98.4% successful passing rate. Your organization should be very proud of this significant achievement, as you have maintained high-quality operations to remain part of an exclusive group of certified facilities!

To maintain your certification, you must annually pay a recertification fee of \$1,250 and submit documentation of standards and operations evidence. Your next site visit will be due in five years, which can be done virtually if all conditions for that are met. The annual document submission, which is an abbreviated set of items to submit, will be much less time-consuming than the full set needed for site visits. You will receive an email with instructions on what is required a few months before your deadline, which is due by the end of the month of the anniversary month of certification. Please note that the information that you provide will only be used in aggregate for summary reports, with protected access.

Benefits associated with your MFA Facility Certification include the following:

1. Discounts on MFA events and conferences.
  - a. Complimentary registration to MFA Summits (max 3 per facility)
  - b. 50% off registration to Medical Fitness Leadership Institute (unlimited)
  - c. 50% off registration to Annual Conference (unlimited)
2. Exclusive access to aggregate summaries of annual key performance indicators for the data and outcomes reported by certified facilities, available on an annual basis.
3. Complimentary invitation to our MFA Certified Facility Forums. These groups are exclusive to personnel from certified facilities and held annually, in person at the Annual Conference, and virtually every other month. The Forums will discuss best practices, ideas for programming and revenue generation, and other relevant topics to provide tangible takeaways.

You will soon receive by email a press release template to share this great news with your community. We will also mail an updated certificate for you to proudly display in your facility.

In addition to those tangible benefits, we believe the three points below illustrate another important benefit: the differentiation you can continue to promote with this designation.

- As a part of the healthcare continuum with MFA Facility Certification, you have established a safe place for healthcare providers to refer patients with confidence.
- The process of achieving and maintaining certification is a strong team-building endeavor with a shared learning experience.
- Knowing your facility is MFA Certified gives your communities and members confidence that you are providing them with the best care and resources possible.

**Congratulations once again on this fantastic achievement!**