

RISK MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS-Home Health Care Edition

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Risk Management drives most, if not all, aspects of your organization. Whether conducting a cost analysis for a possible new program, providing case management for seriously and persistently mental ill consumers, working with a public funding source for determining next year's budget, counseling behind closed doors, transporting customers/consumers, lifting and transferring consumers, hiring and supervising employees, or being in the business of residential care (to name a few) there is a tolerance for risk that must be factored into your every day decisions.

Risk Management has become a buzzword to describe activities that should be both proactive and reactive to the probability or actual occurrence of a specific desired outcome, which is to minimize the probability of a bad business decision or adverse incident occurring. Organizations should take the time to analyze their business, determine practices that are high risk/high impact, plan for dealing with high risk items/high impact items that may occur with an above average probability, and follow-through with and monitor the plan. True accidents are not incidental to the business of health and human services. Organizations should be able to understand that an accident occurs only when factors are truly uncontrollable, not as a matter of course.

For example high risk/high impact issues in home health care are vehicle accidents, theft from your clients by employees, and maltreatment. You have liability established by practice standards and case law to provide professional care based on an approved treatment plan. Failure to follow-through with that prescribed treatment is called maltreatment and should harm come to the client for "professional or para-professional acts" you could be found liable. Likewise you as a Home Health Care organization have an obligation to monitor your employees' behavior. While you cannot observe their behavior 24/7, there may be contributory negligence involved with employee theft or other behavior that causes harm to come to your client.

Now, add the concept of insurability to your risk management protocols. Insurability is a term relating to your competitive attractiveness to the insurance industry. Look again at the previous example and consider that some kind of maltreatment or theft is alleged and you are sued. You obviously put in a claim. Your insurance carrier realizes that no matter how skilled and competent your employees are this does and will occur-you're covered. Insurability asks whether or not your corporate culture makes efforts to understand the incident or loss that you have done your own internal investigation and have taken action based on the conclusions of that investigation, and you have done or are doing something to avoid similar losses in the future. Should similar losses occur, perhaps the wrong conclusions and therefore actions have taken place and you'll need to revisit the process just described a second (or more) time. You must believe that these losses are not just a part of doing business, but that action must be taken.

Part of that action is to ask for help with best practices, to look for trends, to have expert advice available to you. And we at AFC are here to provide that assistance.

We want to hear from you. Please direct questions to Brian M. Block, AFC Insurance through Margie Wicks, Communications Coordinator, margie.wicks@afcins.com or 610-814-2191.