

## Healthcare Risk Mitigation Plan: Overview, Components & Sample

All healthcare organizations face risks or threats. This lesson gives an overview of risk mitigation plans and examples of potential risks to investigate fully. Components of risk mitigation plans are also described with possible responses to events.

### Risk in Healthcare

Anthony is a nurse working in the rehabilitation unit for post-stroke patients. He has taken on an important task of working with a team from all departments identifying risk in their units. This is called **risk assessment**. The risk team will gather all the information to report risks in a formal report to the leadership of all departments.

Looking at the probability of a negative or positive event occurring that causes impact and the interventions to reduce the negative effect is called **risk mitigation**. Risk mitigation is an ongoing process of preparation and prevention of event impacts in an organization and contains many elements to examine. Steps in the process include:

1. Assessment: What are the risks or threats on your unit?
2. Planning: What can we do to prevent or lessen the impact?
3. Response to an event: When an event occurs, work the plan.
4. Evaluation of the response: What went well? What did not go well?

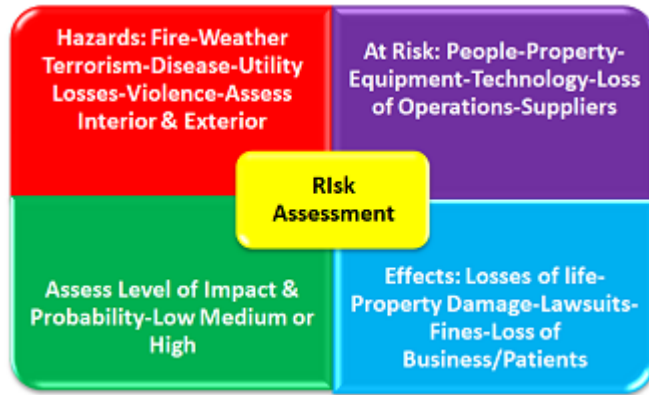
Let's look at a sample of this process.

### Risk Assessment Phase

Most healthcare facilities have a template to follow as they research potential problems. The following is a visual guide to the areas that must be assessed. Anthony is the lead in this

project and is taking an inventory of his unit room by room, interviewing staff and patients regarding safety, and assessing the interior and exterior risks.

Another way to assess the threats of a negative event is to evaluate the impact effect as low, medium, or high impact to those at risk. For example, what would be the impact of a small fire on the opposite end of the building from Anthony's patients? This is considered low impact. However, a room on fire in Anthony's unit could endanger the patients and staff. This would be considered high impact. Even though both are



*Risk mitigation begins with an assessment of these areas*

1. Determine the action to take to decrease the effect of and potential occurrence of the event.
2. Determine the response to the event.

Looking at the sample from Anthony's team will give a snapshot of a risk mitigation plan and its components. Depending on the level of risk, the team can then decide how to respond. Here are a few options to consider:

- Accept: embrace the management of the risky event and plan for response



Components of Risk Mitigation Process

considered low probability, all staff must be prepared to prevent and respond to the possibilities of a fire.

Anthony's team must first determine, what is the probability of an event occurring: low, medium, high, or extreme. Then, should the event occur, what would be the consequence?

## Risk Mitigation Planning Phase

Anthony is in a two-step process for developing a mitigation plan for his team. There is a two-step process for getting their facility ready for any possible threats:

| Severity of Impact | Probability of Occurrence |              |             |             |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Frequent                  | Occasional   | Remote      | Unlikely    |
| Extreme            | Extreme Risk              | Extreme Risk | High Risk   | High Risk   |
| Critical           | Extreme Risk              | High Risk    | Medium Risk | Medium Risk |
| Medium             | High Risk                 | Medium Risk  | Medium Risk | Low Risk    |
| Minor              | Medium Risk               | Low Risk     | Low Risk    | Low Risk    |

- Avoid: attempt to prevent or eliminate the risky event completely
- Control: manage the event following risk analysis
- Transfer: release the responsibility to another entity
- Monitor: develop a plan and watch for changes

After meeting with the leadership, there is an agreement to accept and control the risk. Here are a few things they are considering in risk mitigation of a disease outbreak:

- Education for all employees on personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, gowns, and respirator masks
- Strict hand washing monitoring in all units
- Education regarding isolation procedures
- Monitoring patient and staff vaccinations
- Education for all patients in various forms of multimedia

The actions they will take should an outbreak occur include the following:

- Containment of disease
- Up-to-date call-in rosters with needed staff
- Detailed response plan with isolation, protective equipment, and visitor restrictions
- Information to media via designated staff only
- Reporting cases to public health agencies and the Centers for Disease Control

## Evaluation of the Plan and Event Response

Managing risk events are dynamic events and must be evaluated as they unfold. Changes in the plan are based on what is happening and the size of the event. It is important to see the changing landscape and respond to the changes in ways that can be built into the plan. Risk management is all about being prepared.

Asking these two questions of those who were part of the event will help clarify next steps.

1. What went well during the event and why?

2. What did not go well and why?

Anthony would hold a team debrief, going over the response to the event and possible improvements.

## Lesson Summary

Looking at the probability of a negative or positive event occurring, the impact of the event and the interventions to reduce the negative effect is called **risk mitigation**. The risk mitigation process is dynamic and interrelated and consists of these four areas of management:

- Assessment of risks
- Planning for the event
- Response (responding to the event and reporting)
- Evaluation of the event

The first phase of a solid risk management plan is to perform a **risk assessment**. The assessment includes all internal and external risks in all areas of the organization, including threats to patients, staff, and the business structure. Examples include fire, terrorism, threats to technology, weather, potential violence, loss of supplies or business partners, and loss of life. The second phase is planning the response to a negative event. Determining the action to take to decrease the effect of an event or potential occurrence of the event will take time and expert resources such as the Centers for Disease Control. Third, determine the response to the event. This is the action plan. And finally, evaluate how the plan functioned and what changes need to be made.

The risk mitigation plan of action falls into these categories for response:

- Accept: embrace the risk and plan response
- Avoid: attempt to eliminate the risky event completely
- Control: manage the event following risk analysis
- Transfer: release the responsibility to another entity
- Monitor: develop a plan and watch for changes

The healthcare organization must decide which of the responses is best based on the potential impact or effect of the event and the probability of its occurrence. A handy chart can help leadership decide what, if any, action must be taken by identifying low, medium, high, or extreme risk.