

RISK MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Community Health Centers (CHC), as health care organizations, need to develop risk management plans and establish policies and procedures for promoting the safe and effective delivery of healthcare services to their customers, providing and maintaining safe working environments for staff, and minimizing business disruptions threatening financial stability.

Risk management is the dynamic process of minimizing potential losses; it uses proactive and reactive strategies for identifying potential hazards and reducing risk. Hazardous incidents for patients can happen at any time from the moment they walk into the clinic until they leave the clinic. Similarly, health center staff can encounter risky situations while they are at the health center or when performing their duties in the community setting. In order to manage risk, health centers must assure the proper credentialing and privileging of their health care practitioners; practice optimal infection control measures; establish a process for preventing medication errors; train staff in effective ways for communicating with customers and the health care team; maintain patient confidentiality; acquire proper liability insurance; train staff in the established risk management process; and prepare for unexpected events such as natural disasters or other emergencies. When conducting the Vulnerability Assessment and developing the Management Plan, it is advantageous to health centers to also include strategies for preparing their staff and customers to minimize risk in case of unexpected emergencies or disasters.

As Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) is implemented and enabling services such as outreach, case management, transportation, and home visitation continue to expand, there is a need for health centers to establish policies and procedures to address the safety of community workers, including nurses, social workers, community representatives, patient navigators, case managers, and lay health workers when they are working in the community and visiting or transporting patients. NCFH created a series of sample policy and procedures addressing some of these topics. We invite you to download these documents and customize them according to your health center needs and applicable local and state laws.