

**KEY ACTIONS**  
for health service  
organisations

**Fact sheet 14:**

# Assessing high-risk scenarios during an assessment

## AHSSQA Scheme

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) is responsible under the National Health Reform Act 2011 for the formulation of standards relating to health care safety and quality matters and for formulating and coordinating the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme (the Scheme).

The Commission has undertaken a comprehensive review of the Scheme and produced a series of fact sheets to outline the changes to accreditation processes for health service organisations.

## NSQHS Standards (second edition)

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards were developed by the Commission in collaboration with the Australian Government, states and territories, the private sector, clinical experts, patients and carers. The primary aims of the NSQHS Standards are to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision. They provide a quality-assurance mechanism that tests whether relevant systems are in place to ensure expected standards of safety and quality are met.

Health service organisations will transition to the second edition of the NSQHS Standards from January 2019.

**At each assessment to the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (second edition) the Commission requires assessors to test an organisation's ability to provide safe care including at times of high patient risk.**

The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that organisations have the systems, processes and personnel to maintain high-quality care at all times including times of increased risk to patients.

Not all risks that impact on patient care relate to clinical care.

There are a broad range of risks that can affect patient safety and quality. These include corporate, financial, legal and compliance, physical or assessment management risks as well as clinical risks.

Everyone in the organisation is responsible for minimising risks, however specific individuals or groups may be delegated accountability for the oversight and management of specific risks.

### **Patient risks commonly increases when there are:**

- Changes to service delivery models
- Mergers of existing services
- Relocation of services
- Capital works
- Intakes of new staff, particularly new graduates
- Introduction of new services or technologies
- Disruptions to essential utilities
- Gaps in senior leadership
- Periods of low staffing levels including weekends and nights
- Gaps in clinical workforce
- Loss of access to electronic patient records or other electronic clinical data collection or booking systems
- Disruptive or aggressive patient/s, families or other member/s of the community
- Circumstances that lead to a proceduralist being unable to complete a case
- Failures of vital equipment
- Seasonal fluctuations in patient populations.



In the Clinical Governance Standards of the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (second edition) is Action 1.10 that requires health service organisations to identify and manage risk. It states:

**Action 1.10** The health service organisation:

- a. Identifies and documents organisational risks
- b. Uses clinical and other data collections to support risk assessments
- c. Acts to reduce risks
- d. Regularly reviews and acts to improve the effectiveness of risk management systems
- e. Reports on risks to the workforce and consumers
- f. Plans for and manages, internal and external emergencies and disasters

Assessing high risk scenarios is part of the assessment of this action, but also should be considered when assessing other actions in the standards that maybe affected by the specific scenario. For example:

**Action 1.16** – health care records may be impacted if the healthcare records are unavailable due to power disruptions or IT outages

**Action 1.26** – supervision of the clinical workforce may be impacted if there are gaps in the senior clinical workforce

**Action 5.4** – collaboration and teamwork may be impacted if there are gaps in the clinical workforce overnight or on weekends.

The intent is to assess risks that may be infrequent, but have a significant consequence on patient safety and quality if not managed appropriately. It examines the organisations service continuity and recovery planning for patient safety and quality.

To test a high risk scenario, assessors will be required to identify one or two major risks from the organisations risk register or select one or two risks from the list of common risks developed by the Commission. These risk scenarios are to be assessed using the PICMoRS structured assessment method (see Fact Sheet 12).

**PICMoRS Example:**

Examples of questions assessors could ask using the PICMoRS structured assessment method for high risk scenario are as follows:

<b>Process</b>	What do you do to manage <high risk scenario>? Is this documented? How would you escalate your concerns about this risk? Has this process been tested? Do you know who is accountable for managing this risk?
<b>Process</b>	Have there been any recent changes to this process? Have the changes been tested?
<b>Consumers</b>	Are patients told about the increased risk? How are consumers involved in designing or evaluating strategies for managing <high risk scenario>?
<b>Monitoring</b>	How is this risk monitored? How would you know if the process to manage <high risk scenario> is being used?
<b>Reporting</b>	Where is information on <high risk scenario> reported? How is the accountable officer / committee informed about this risk?
<b>Systems</b>	How is information <high risk scenario> used to inform other safety and quality systems? Where is this documented? Is there a policy related to this risk?

Where processes are not in place to mitigate risks describe in the scenario, Action 1.10 or any other related action should be rated not met.

**Questions?**

For more information, please visit: [safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards)

You can also email the NSQHS Standards Advice Centre at: [accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au) or call 1800 304 056.