

INFORMATION
for CMO mental health
service providers

Using a risk management approach

The National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations (NSQMHC MO Standards) aim to improve the quality of community managed mental health service provision, and to protect consumers, their families and carers from harm.

The three NSQMHC MO Standards include 82 actions related to Practice Governance, Partnering with Consumers, Families and Carers and Models of Care. They describe the level of care and the safeguards that a community managed organisation should provide.

Service providers using the NSQMHC MO Standards should have systems and processes in place to reduce the risk of harm and increase confidence and assurance in the quality of their mental health services.

Why a risk management approach?

Service providers using a risk management approach will assess the risks associated with each action in the NSQMHC MO Standards. The risk assessment findings will help you to prioritise and mitigate risks identified as you implement the standards.

Not all actions within each standard will apply to your organisation and the mental health services you offer. The nature, size and complexity of your mental health services and the risk to consumers, their families and carers, will decide which actions apply and the strategies needed to implement them. The models of care that mental health services are using may also inform whether an action is relevant. For example, if your service only provides day services, actions about residential services will not be applicable.

Who may be at risk?

Some consumers and support people may be more at risk than other people. For example, children and young people, older people, people from diverse population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people at risk of homelessness.

The service provider workforce may be exposed to risk. For example, peer workers and others who provide or support the delivery of mental health services.

Service providers may have corporate, or practice risk associated with their services. Such risk may be related to the design of the mental health service and how it is delivered.

Risk management process

The first step in the risk management process is to consider each action in the NSQMHCMO Standards and decide whether it is applicable to the type of mental health services you offer. When an action is determined as not consistent with the type of services offered, it should be recorded as 'not applicable', along with the rationale for the decision. The [self-assessment tool](#) is a good place to record these decisions.

For actions that apply to your organisation, you should conduct a risk assessment of the relevant systems and processes you have in place for your mental health services.

In practice, this means that you should assess the risk associated with each action and what you need to do to manage or mitigate that risk. Risk assessment considers the:

- Size and complexity of an organisation
- Types of mental health services offered
- Levels of risk associated with the services.

For example, a service provider may be an organisation with multiple services and a large workforce, or a sole trader with a single service. The level of risk and the required mitigation strategies will be different for each provider.

In addition to determining the tasks required to ensure that an action is met, you can use the level of assessed risk to set a priority for each task. The tasks and the priority ratings can then be included in an action plan.

How to determine risk

To help assess risk, consider the five basic principles of risk management, which are to:

1. **Avoid risk.** Identify strategies that avoid the risk whenever possible; a risk that cannot be eliminated must be managed.
2. **Identify risk.** Assess the risk, identify the nature of the risk and who is involved.
3. **Analyse risk.** Examine the risk, how likely it is to happen, and what the consequences are if it happens.
4. **Evaluate risk.** Determine how the risk can be reduced or eliminated, and document the processes, responses and outcomes.
5. **Treat risks.** Manage the risk by determining who is responsible for taking actions, and when and how this will be monitored.

To consider these principles more closely, ask the following questions:

- Who is at risk?
- What is involved?
- What factors allow it to happen?
- How likely is it?
- What are the consequences?
- What can be done?
- Is there a solution for each identified situation or risk?

Likelihood and possible consequences of the risk?

The risk assessment requires you to assess the likelihood of the risk occurring and the potential consequences. Data sources that may help you understand how likely a risk is to occur include:

- Monitoring audit results
- Surveillance data
- Complaints
- Observations
- Literature
- Benchmarking.

Further information

Further information on the NSQMHCMO Standards and accreditation can be found at:
www.safetyandquality.gov.au/mh-cmos

Email: Advice.Centre@safetyandquality.gov.au

Phone: 1800 304 056

safetyandquality.gov.au



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