

## Management Oversight in Home Healthcare

Home healthcare is an occupation that involves unique health and safety risks because home care staff usually work alone in largely uncontrolled environments.<sup>1</sup>

Injuries and illnesses are some of the health and safety risks that may result from home health staff performing their jobs. Other home care risks include those involving employment issues, workers' compensation, the social environment, and more.<sup>2</sup>

Management oversight is integral to mitigating potential risks involving home care staff and patients. To pinpoint specific areas of risk, home healthcare organizations can assess the occupational hazards in patients' homes. Once these hazards are identified, staff can devise plans to improve worker and patient safety.

The risk tips in this resource provide a high-level overview of strategies for reducing risks to home healthcare personnel.<sup>3</sup>

1

Assess the inside and outside of patients' homes for any unsafe environmental conditions (e.g., fall hazards, fire safety issues, aggressive pets, unsanitary conditions, etc.). Plan to work with patients/families and external agencies to further evaluate and resolve any unsafe conditions identified in the assessment.

2

Provide home healthcare staff with regulatory agency resources and contact information, including local emergency medical services, law enforcement, and area aging services.

3

Conduct periodic onsite audits of patients' homes to ensure safety and verify that home healthcare staff are complying with policies and procedures and delivering appropriate patient care.

4

Ensure home healthcare staff understand their scopes of practice, as well as professional responsibilities to their patients.

5

Implement strategies to reduce risks associated with hiring, firing, and retaining home healthcare staff (e.g., developing thorough employment policies, conducting background checks, verifying staff members' training and education, establishing consistent disciplinary actions, and creating support resources).

6

Make sure your organization is committed to, and has policies associated with, corporate compliance, including adhering to laws and regulations on wages, overtime, and worker classification.

7

Enact policies to prevent incivility, discrimination, and harassment. Develop processes for reporting, evaluating, and documenting these situations, and respond to any complaints in a timely manner.

8

Conduct routine documentation reviews of patient health records to ensure that patient care reflects provider orders and complies with policies and procedures as well as regulatory mandates.

9

Implement strategies to prevent musculoskeletal disorders in home healthcare staff. Provide or help procure assistive devices (e.g., lifts, transfer devices, adjustable beds, grab bars, etc.) to reduce the risk of injuries.

10

Develop a comprehensive [violence prevention program](#) that includes robust policies and procedures that address personal safety measures for home healthcare workers.

11

Implement a sharps safety plan to prevent injuries from sharps and exposure to body fluids. Make sure the plan includes a protocol for promptly responding to any exposures that occur.

12

Monitor home healthcare staff for stress and burnout. Identify the factors contributing to these issues, and devise tactics to combat them (e.g., modifying work processes, providing training and education, offering support resources, and creating open dialogue with workers).

13

Place a strong emphasis on maintaining professional boundaries and following the organization's code of conduct. Make sure policies are in place that address sexual misconduct, social media use, personal electronic device use, photography, and so on.

14

Create policies that promote driver and vehicle safety and reduce liability exposure, including guidance related to appropriate training, safety standards, adequate insurance coverage, vehicle servicing, etc. Make sure staff members who will be driving as part of their jobs have valid licenses.

## Resources

Learn more about mitigating risks in the home healthcare environment with the following resources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: The Unique Occupational Environment of the Home Healthcare Worker](#)
- [ECRI: Home Care: Staff-Related Risks](#)

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- [MedPro Group: Risk Tips: Hiring Qualified Nurses for Home Healthcare](#)
  - [MedPro Group: Risk Tips: Mitigating Risks in Hospice Care](#)
  - [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health: Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others: Training for Homecare Workers](#)
  - [National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health: About Workplace Violence](#)
  - [Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Home Healthcare](#)
  - [Workplace Health & Safety: Environmental Health and Safety Hazards Experienced by Home Health Care Providers](#)

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (n.d.). Home healthcare. Retrieved from [www.osha.gov/home-healthcare](http://www.osha.gov/home-healthcare)

<sup>2</sup> ECRI. (2017, January 6). Home care: Staff-related risks. *Health System Risk Management*. Retrieved from [www.ecri.org](http://www.ecri.org)

<sup>3</sup> The risk tips in this publication are based on the following resources: ECRI, Home care: Staff-related risks; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2014). *Caring for yourself while caring for others: Practical tips for home healthcare workers*. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-103/pdf/2015-103.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-103/pdf/2015-103.pdf)

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