Health Information Compliance Alert

Toolkit: Evaluate Your Practice Risks with This Q-and-A

Plan for every scenario to sidestep chaos.

Accidents happen, employees leave, and disasters upend practice protocols. Risk assessments will help your practice home in on problems like these while analysis of the findings will guide you toward an effective plan. Read on for tips on how to ready your practice for any adverse situation.

Every business has unique liabilities depending on geographic location, demographics, urban or rural locale, revenue, number of employees - and the list goes on. Medical practices must incorporate other realities beyond these. **Cathy Reisenwitz**, a web content writer and research analyst at **Capterra** in San Francisco, suggests, on the Capterra blog, asking these questions when writing a risk management plan:

- "What could go wrong?"

Part of a comprehensive evaluation is being a committed Debbie Downer and seriously considering all of the worst scenarios for your practice. Knowing the myriad bad scenarios will help you figure out your particular vulnerabilities and liabilities.

Consider natural and manmade disasters, malpractice cases, discontent patients, equipment failure, HIPAA breaches, cyber attacks, power outages, communication failures, scheduling woes, angry employees - just to start.

- "What's the likelihood?"

Give every scenario a score, Reisenwitz suggests.

Think of this question as a means of organization. Consider how you order the scenarios: Does it make the most sense for you and your practice to put the "most likely" scenarios at the forefront of your considerations or the "most catastrophic"? However you choose to organize it, this question is a great springboard for the proactive measures you'll need to enact.

- "How crippling will it be?"

Think about how catastrophic every scenario would be - for your bottom line, for your employees, for your business's reputation, for your building, for your insurance costs, for safety.

Add another score for level of catastrophe, she suggests.

- "What can we do to prevent this from happening?"

You know that working fire alarms help warn everyone of fire or smoke. What other preventive measures can you enact now to prevent the worst from happening later?

"If you order a test, is anyone checking to be sure the test was run, the results are in, and the patient knows the results? Similarly, is anyone following up when patients miss important appointments? These simple changes can avoid a lot of patient harm. Figure out which is which and plan accordingly," she says.

- "What can we do to make this less catastrophic?"

Incorporating contingencies and Plan Bs (and Cs and Ds and so on) into your policies and protocols can go a long way in

simplifying and hastening your response when one of these scenarios inevitably arises.

- "Who is responsible for what?"

Assign specific responsibilities to specific employees or roles - for "everyday" bad scenarios as well as full-on disasters. Make sure everyone knows their responsibilities beforehand, so the crisis isn't heightened by confusion or apathy.