



College of  
Occupational Therapists  
of British Columbia

## **COTBC Practice Standard for Infection Prevention and Control**

# **Risk Assessment and Management**

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# Practice Standard for Infection Prevention and Control

## Risk Assessment and Management



Risk management is “nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm” (Health and Safety Executive, 1999, p. 1).

Identifying and implementing infection prevention and control best practices can be challenging. The process requires that the occupational therapist use professional knowledge and critical thinking to ensure that clients receive safe, ethical, and competent occupational therapy services. The occupational therapist can benefit from using a risk management approach to assist with implementing infection prevention and control measures.

# Risk Assessment and Management, continued

## Step One: Identify Potential Risk Factors

Risk factors are circumstances and/or facts that influence the implementation of infection prevention and control measures. Examples of relevant risk factors include the following.

### Nature of the Referral

- Urgency of the services required.
- Referral for specific services that are not appropriate for the client at the time.
- Inherent risks associated with the requested service.

### Client's Presentation and Vulnerability

- Diagnosis of a communicable disease.
- Cultural beliefs and lifestyle values.
- Fluctuating cognitive or physical abilities due to fatigue, pain, medications, stress, distractions, or nature of illness.
- Communication challenges or barriers.
- Ability to adhere to infection prevention and control practices of respiratory and hand hygiene.

### Practice Setting and Environmental Conditions

- Location where tasks are being completed.
- Availability, accessibility, and efficacy of virtual health options.
- Availability of hand hygiene supplies, cleaning materials, appropriate ventilation, and PPE.
- Presence of other individuals in the practice environment.

### Occupational Therapist's Skills and Knowledge

- Lack of knowledge of current best practices for infection prevention and control measures.
- Lack of knowledge of current public health orders, restrictions, and recommendations.
- Lack of knowledge of employer policies and procedures.
- Lack of knowledge of safe handling and disposal of hazardous materials.

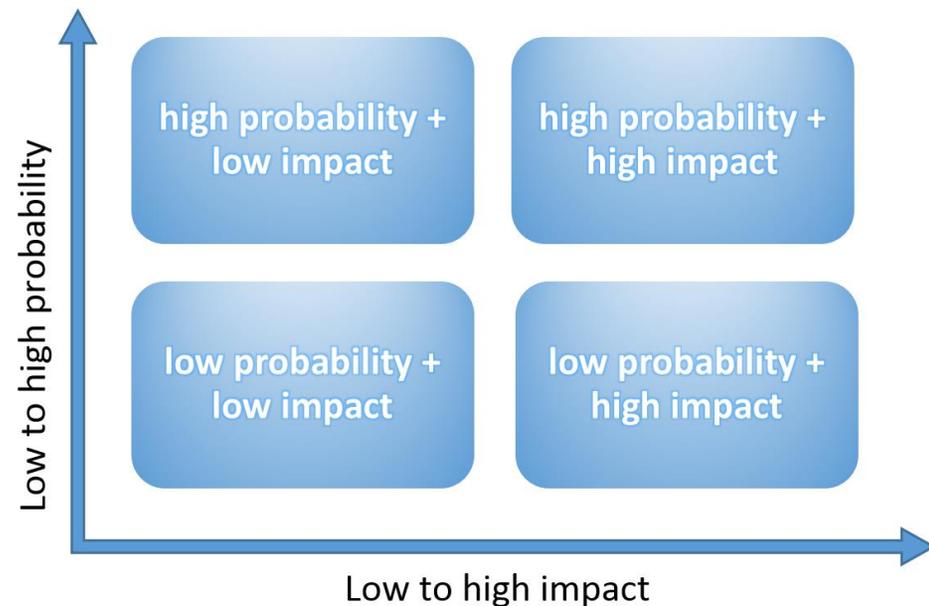
# Risk Assessment and Management, continued

## Step Two: Consider the Probability and Severity of Impact

Once the risk factors are identified, the occupational therapist assesses

- the probability of each risk (i.e., how likely is it); and
- the negative impact (i.e., what degree of harm could the risk cause the client).

The risks can be classified from low probability and low impact to high probability and high impact.



# Risk Assessment and Management, continued

## Step Three: Take Action

The goal is to choose actions or measures that help minimize the risks as much as possible.

### **Actions could include but are not limited to the following:**

- Providing occupational therapy services through virtual health options.
- Reinforcing policies that encourage everyone to stay home if unwell.
- Implementing screening procedures for identified and applicable symptoms.
- Ensuring availability of necessary supplies for practising hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfecting the practice environment and shared reusable equipment.
- Implementing policies and procedures to address cleaning the practice environment, including high-touch surfaces, shared practice spaces, shared reusable equipment, and mobile practice environments.
- Wearing appropriate PPE for each specific task and situation.
- Ensuring that clients are not sharing equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, activity supplies, pens, electronic devices, toys) or that equipment is appropriately cleaned and disinfected between use or clients.
- Being mindful of following public health recommendations while in shared spaces, such as offices and break rooms.

# Risk Assessment and Management, continued

## Step Four: Record Your Actions

The risk management process is dynamic and ongoing throughout the care continuum.

It is important to record the risk management actions taken, to demonstrate that precautions were taken to protect the client from harm and minimize risk. The occupational therapist is required to document according to *COTBC Practice Standards for Managing Client Information* (2019).