



College of
Occupational Therapists
of British Columbia

COTBC Practice Standards for Managing Client Information, 2014

Risk Assessment and Management

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Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management



Safe management of client information requires that the occupational therapist make reasoned decisions regarding which information to collect, how to record it, and how to protect it. A risk management approach to managing client information throughout the care continuum is recommended to prevent harm.

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).

Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management, continued



The 1st step is to identify potential risk factors

Nature of Referral

- Accuracy and quality of information from other sources (e.g., other professionals, client's family members or significant others).
- Pressure on or coercion of client to respond or behave in a certain way.
- Power of referral source to influence funding of services.
- Capacity to authorize release of information, give consent for direct care, or make informed health care decisions.
- Fluctuating performance in different situations due to fatigue, pain, medications, stress, distractions, etc.
- Cultural beliefs and values.

Complexity of Client's Presentation

- Complexity of condition including physical, mental, and social dimensions.
- Stability of condition.

- Ability to give and receive accurate information: language barriers; speech deficits; minimal dominant hand use which prevents proper signature; or problems with reading, seeing, understanding complex information, or retaining information.

continued on next page

Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management, continued



More Risk Factors

Environmental Conditions

- Time (or funding) allowed for documentation.
- Pressure from others on the client or the occupational therapist to document findings and recommendations in a certain way.
- Access to client information by unauthorized persons (e.g., in home office, car).
- Media or data storage or sharing integrity.
- Software reliability.

Occupational Therapist's Skills and Knowledge

- Lack of or insufficient
 - Knowledge of current legislation (e.g., requirements surrounding consent, privacy, access to records, confidentiality).
 - Clinical knowledge to proceed with the occupational therapy service required.
 - Knowledge of use of technology in controlling confidentiality of transmitted information, or storing and protecting information (e.g., encryption, firewalls).
 - Level of experience in report writing and other documentation procedures.
 - Ability to communicate information to the client or client representative.
 - Accuracy of testing and analysis of assessments.
 - Therapeutic or trusting relationship with the client.
 - Skill to be able to identify possible impaired capacity of the client.

Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management, continued

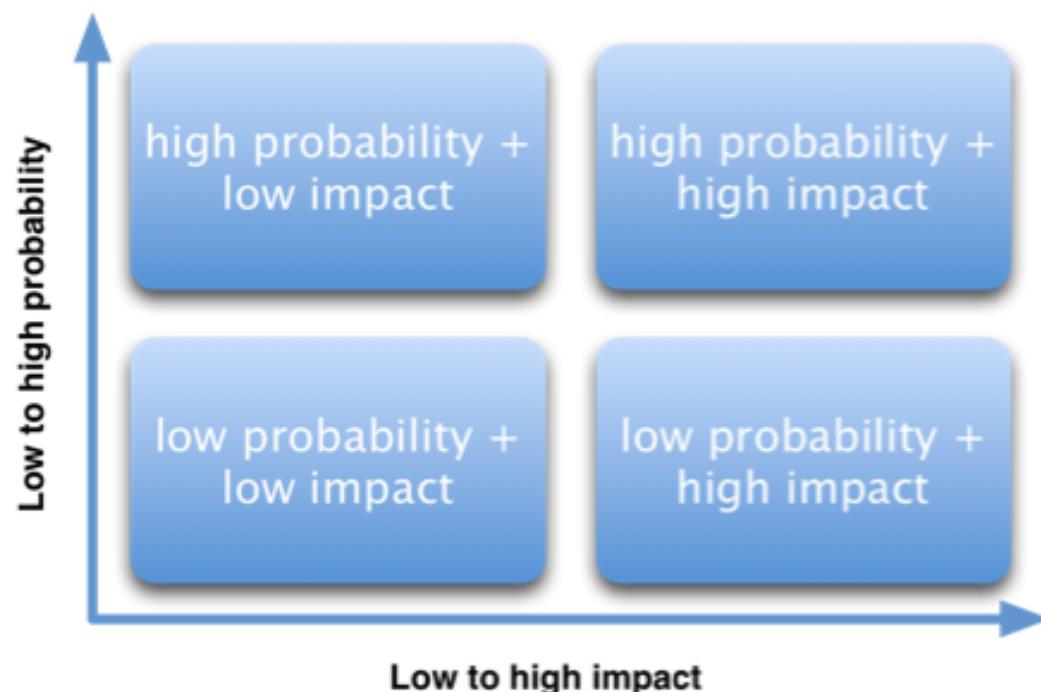


The 2nd step is to consider the probability and severity of impact

Once the factors are identified, the occupational therapist assesses:

1. the probability of each risk (i.e., how likely is it); and
2. 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.



Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management, continued



The 3rd step is to take action

The goal is to choose an action or precautions that are suitable and sufficient to minimize the risk. There may not be a perfect solution.

In the case of managing client information, this action could include

- not proceeding with the collection of information;
- expanding the amount of information collected and recorded;

- increasing the frequency of information collected and recorded;
- implementing higher security measures to protect the information;
- ensuring adherence to legislated requirements respecting record retention and destruction;
- discussing the occupational therapy record with the client as part of providing access; and
- ensuring client consent prior to disclosing occupational therapy information.

Practice Standards for Managing Client Information

Risk Assessment and Management, continued



The 4th step is to record your actions

This risk management process is dynamic and ongoing throughout the care continuum and even after the file is closed.

It is important to record the risk management actions taken, to demonstrate that precautions were taken to protect the client from harm and to minimize risk.



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Practice Standards in this series: *Managing Client Information* (2014)

- 1. Collecting and Recording Client Information**
- 2. Protecting Client Information (Privacy and Security)**
- 3. Client Access to the Occupational Therapy Record**
- 4. Disclosing the Occupational Therapy Record**
- 5. Records Respecting Financial Matters**
- 6. Retention and Destruction of the Occupational Therapy Record**

For more information regarding this series of practice standards, or other practice supports, please contact the College at:

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