RISK ASSESSMENT

An annual risk assessment related to infection prevention and control should be completed and based on the population served, available infection surveillance, care, treatment and services provided, and the geographic location. Then the infection prevention plan is developed addressing specific areas as identified by the risk assessment.

The goals are to eliminate or minimize the possibility of transmitting infections. Set attainable goals, such as:

1. Limit/eliminate unprotected exposure to pathogens
2. Limit/eliminate the spread of infections associated with procedures
3. Limit/eliminate the spread of infections associated with the use of medical equipment, devices and supplies
4. Improve annual compliance with hand hygiene in (YEAR) to (%)
5. Improve overall staff influenza vaccination % in (YEAR) to (%) from (stats from previous year)

Something that is not looked at and specifically included in other settings, is conducting a risk assessment in the home of the client, looking at where cleaning or hygienic cleaning is necessary and providing appropriate education on cleaning these surfaces/areas.

These areas can be grouped as follows:

1. Reservoir sites: Such as sinks, u-bends, toilet bowls
2. Reservoir disseminators: Such as wet cleaning cloths, mops and sponges—these regularly come into contact with germs and can support their growth but also, just by the way they are used, carry a high risk of spreading germs
3. Hands, hand contact surfaces, food preparation surfaces and laundry: These surfaces carry a constant risk of spreading germs.
4. Other surfaces, such as floors and walls—the risk of contamination and exposure via these surfaces is low but can present issues such as when there is soiling of the floor and there are pets and/or babies present.

Another area of the home that should be assessed for risk is the presence of pets. There is evidence that pets, including reptiles and birds, can harbor infections that can be transmitted to humans. Domestic animals such as cats and dogs can harbor molds and yeasts in their coats and bacteria in their feces. Puppies and kittens with diarrhea can pass on infections such as *Campylobacter.* Exotic pets such as reptiles have been known to pass on infections such as *Salmonella*. Farm animals can also pass infections from animals to humans. Some infections are carried on the fur and can be transferred by touching and stoking animals and not washing hands. Fungal skin infections such as ringworm can be transmitted to humans by direct contact with animals. The importance of keeping separate equipment for pets, cleaning surfaces where pets have touched and washing hands before food preparation should be stressed.

Pregnant women should not handle litter boxes as germs excreted in animal feces can affect the developing fetus. Listeria is also a particular risk for pregnant women.

Included in the forms section is a sample Risk Assessment tool which can be used for the annual assessment purposes.

This material was prepared by the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 11S0W-GPQIN-NE-HHIP-13/1117