

The University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
SW5810 - Strategic Risk Management in Agencies
(1credit)

I. Course Description

Strategic Risk Management in Human Service Settings. Topics include: relationship between mission and risk management, agency internal systems and controls, liability and insurance, volunteer program management, board orientation and training, principles of enlightened risk taking, and protecting inventory and fixed assets.

II. Course Context

Risk Management in Human Service Agencies is emerging as a top priority skill for administrators. Strong stewardship and leadership require that human service agency staff do all they can to protect organizational assets. This class offers essential strategies by which leaders can minimize risk to the agency, its assets and resources. The curriculum examines the importance of board level engagement and involvement in risk management, appropriate agency policies/procedures, insurance carriers, effective internal control measures and prevention strategies in the management of risk. We will also engage with the concept of “enlightened risk management”, which promotes the idea that risk-taking can also be a source of growth and strength for agencies.

The class offers a mix of lecture, discussion and hands-on learning for people new to organizational management and for those who want to re-visit risk management in the current challenging environment.

III. Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course participants will:

1. Understand the role of risk management in the nonprofit sector.
2. Identify the various risk management strategies employed in the nonprofit sector.
3. Define dimensions of agency exposure to risk.
4. Be able to evaluate and prioritize agency risk, particularly in the context of volunteer-driven programs and services.
5. Gain introductory knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
6. Comprehend various nonprofit legal issues and challenges in the context of risk management.
7. Understand the relationship between board training/orientation and risk management.

IV. Course Requirements

Class preparation and participation –In the context of the School of Social Work’s values, I take seriously our obligation to educate students in the basic knowledge and competencies of social work management and leadership. Regular attendance, diligent preparation and thoughtful participation are essential to achieving these educational outcomes. Class members are expected to come to class on time each session, having read assigned material, prepared to enter into reflective discussion, and willing to participate actively in class exercises.

Assignment Option 1 – Through interviews and discussions with agency staff, and review of agency written materials, analyze and assess the risk management efforts of a local nonprofit organization and make recommendations for improving those efforts. Be sure to integrate materials from course readings, lectures, discussions, and guest speakers into your assessment and recommendations. (10-12 typed, double-spaced pages for individuals; see me regarding length requirements for team projects)

Or-

Assignment Option 2 – Through online or library research, identify a nonprofit organization in which you are interested. Describe the agency and discuss its mission. Integrating materials from course readings, lectures, discussions, and guest speakers, discuss three types of social service risk management that are particularly applicable to that organization, and explain why they are essential to the agency's health. (10-12 typed, double-spaced pages)

Team option – Assignment option 1 may be undertaken by a team (2-3 people) of class members rather than by an individual student. Team projects must be more extensive in analysis, depth, and detail.

Grading criteria for final draft of written assignment – engagement with course concepts and materials (35 points), analysis and application to a specific nonprofit organization (35 points).

V. Required Texts

Healthy Nonprofits: Conserving Scarce Resources Through Effective Internal Controls, 1996, Published by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center

Additional readings will be found in your course packet and distributed in class.

VI. Course Content- Topics and Readings

Week 1

Introductions
Course and Syllabus Overview
Class Small Group Discussion
Risk Management: What and Why?
Risk Management Committee: Staffing and Responsibilities
Setting Risk Management Goals
Identifying and Analyzing Risk in Your Agency
Dimensions of Agency Risk
Strategies and Tools
Workplace Safety: The Basics
Crisis Management

Week 2

Readings:
What is Risk?, NRMCM, 2002 (Packet)
Key Legal Terms, Chapter One, NRMCM, 2002 (Packet)
Legal Definitions of Sexual Harassment Legal Aspects, 2000 (Class handout)
Eliminating Sexual Harassment in Your Law Office Thomas and Sutaria (Class handout)
Checklist for a Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Harassment Office of Civil Rights, 2004 (Class handout)

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
How to Handle Accidents in Your Agency
Writing Policies

Week 3

Readings:

Intellectual Property Chapter Four, NRMCC, 2002

Defamation Chapter Five, NRMCC, 2002

Employment Liability Chapter Six, NRMCC, 2002

Managing Fundraising Risks (Class handout)

The ADA: Questions and Answers (Class handout)

United Way Board Members Question Officials' Spending New York Times, 2002 (Class handout)

Guilty Plea Due Today in United Way Theft New York Times, 2003 (Class handout)

Former Charity Head Ordered to Prison New York Times, 1996 (Class handout)

Week 4

Readings:

How to Fire A Volunteer and Live to Tell About It, McCurley (Class handout)

Volunteering Is Inherently Risky, Ellis (Class handout)

Federal Law Protects Volunteers, Kramer (Class handout)

Board Training and Orientation: Video and Discussion

Week 5

Readings:

Healthy Nonprofits: Conserving Scarce Resources Through Effective Internal Controls (entire book)

Internal Controls and Fraud Prevention

Business Continuity Planning

Role-play Exercise:

- Risk Management Scenarios: Application/Analysis/Recommendations