

Preliminary risk assessment - General Information

Immediacy, accountability, kindness



The review of serious incidents in New South Wales is completed in stages. The preliminary risk assessment is the first stage of this process and is explained here.

A preliminary risk assessment is a legal requirement for serious incidents that result in an unexpected death or are listed as an Australian Sentinel Event¹.

Assessors

The Chief Executive assigns a team of assessors to complete a preliminary risk assessment within 72 hours. The team are usually two or more staff who are independent of the serious incident. The Ministry of Health is also notified of serious incidents and can direct that a preliminary risk assessment is completed sooner.

Purpose

1. Understand the events around the serious incident
2. Early identification of remaining risks for other patients or staff
3. Identify immediate actions for people to be safe and supported
4. Appointment of a dedicated family contact to liaise with the family or carer
5. Make any immediate notifications to external parties e.g. Coroner
6. Guide the next steps to be taken

Reporting

The assessors work through a set of mandatory questions. When required, they will visit the location of the incident, read notes, access records, take photos, speak to staff, families or other people that may have information to provide. These conversations will be kept confidential.

The report from the preliminary risk assessment team is given to the Chief Executive and the team undertaking the detailed serious incident review. The report is discussed with family or carers and a formal record is kept of the meeting.

Legal considerations

It is important to note that a preliminary risk assessment and report are privileged. This means that the team involved in carrying out the assessment and writing the report cannot be compelled to provide evidence in any legal proceedings.

All of the documents and discussions that take place must not be shared with other people. All records are stored securely and separately to ensure that privilege is maintained.

The dedicated family contact

During this process, the dedicated family contact is appointed. This staff member will support, assist, & regularly communicate with family, carers & the review teams.

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These are the Guiding principles we use when managing serious incidents

The preliminary risk assessment reinforces our commitment to immediacy, accountability and kindness in response to serious incidents.

Immediacy

We act immediately when people are harmed or at risk of harm

Accountability

We are open when things go wrong
We investigate to learn
We make changes to improve
We share what we find and learn

Kindness

We are caring
We are fair and just
We support all who are affected

For further information you can speak to your dedicated contact, contact your Clinical Governance Unit or visit the Clinical Excellence Commission website

<http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/>

¹ [Australian Sentinel Events](#)