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Risk Management for Integrated Home Care Services During COVID-19 Pandemic: An Experience Sharing From An NGO Perspective

香港仔坊會 AKA Social Service

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Significance

- The pandemic of COVID-19 has brought great challenges to all public services.
- The Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Social Service (AKA) is a non-government organization which provides a wide range of services to meet the urgent needs for the public and vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly), especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
- Effective and efficient risk management can help organisations to early identify and analysis the needs and risks, and prioritize and evaluate the services.

QR code to introduce the service of AKA

Objectives

To describe the risk management process in:
- formulating a well-structured committee and working group and professional consultation team.
- preventing the spread of COVID-19 via space and resource management.
- promoting staff health-related knowledge and morale via in-service training, psychological support, and institutional policies.
- continuously providing services to meet the needs of service users and enhancing the quality and reach of service.

Methods

- A 2-hour experience sharing with semi-structured interview guide was conducted with an administrative representative from AKA to share her experience in risk management for the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2020.
- Thematic content analyse was adopted to identify specific management themes.
- A conceptual framework modified by International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) 31000 was used to understand the risk management process, including risk identification, analysis, evaluation and treatment.
- Communication, consultation, monitoring and review were also the crucial components in the risk management process (results not shown).

Fig 1: The risk management process

Communication & consultation — Risk identification → Risk analysis → Risk evaluation → Risk treatment — Monitoring & review

Results

- Four management themes were identified, including
  - o Structure o Space & resources o Staff training & support o Service continuation & enhancement

Theme	Risk identification & analysis	Risk evaluation & treatment
Structure	• Reduction of public and community services by the government. • Insufficient workforce owing to the quarantine requirement. • Increase in needs from service users and the community.	• Set up management and working committees by senior management team. • Consulted professional opinions. • Connected with neighboring associations, institutions and partners, e.g. nearby schools, local leaders and community.
Space & resources	• Shortage of space in minimize risks for employees and insufficient space for infection control training. • Massive shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff. • Financial burden related to the expenses of PPE, disinfection supplies and hiring of temporary staff.	• Adopted staff clustering, e.g. working venues, home office for clerical support staff and arranged frontline staff located at different offices. • Borrowed the classrooms from nearby schools for infection control training. • Adopted a multi-pronged approach for purchasing PPE, including online purchases and applied special grants from Social Welfare Department and Jockey Club Charity Trusts.
Staff training & support	• Knowledge on the needs of infection control measures and management of COVID-19 related issues. • Risk of contracting the infection after home visit. • Frontline staff perceived more stress and risk of mental problems.	• Offered infection control training and individual consultation to staff and delivered the latest preventive measures to staff regularly. • Provided showering facilities for staff after home visits. • Purchased and delivered healthy foods to frontline service staff as positive reinforcement and provided psychological support.
Service continuation & enhancement	• Insufficient PPE, daily necessities and hygiene products for service users and vulnerable groups. • Unable to sustain the meal delivery service due to the quarantine of the cook. • Some service users were not able to maintain household hygiene. • The mental health of service users was affected by the social distancing policy and fear of COVID-19.	• Purchased, packed and delivered PPE and care packs with daily essentials and hygiene products to service users and vulnerable groups. • Collaborated with nearby local restaurants to prepare hot meals for the service users and different parties to provide free cleansing services to service users, disadvantaged elders and families in the community. • Arranged volunteers to make regular phone calls to vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly). • Arranged youth volunteers to teach the elderly to use online social media to obtain updated information and communicate with others.

Conclusion

- The pandemic of COVID-19 has brought significant challenges globally and an effective and efficient risk management process is vital for crisis management, as well as staff and service assurance and enhancement.