
The Risk Retention Reporter

Two RRGs Instrumental in New Education Program

Two risk retention groups have joined forces with a healthcare research group to create a new course of study for risk management in senior care, a specialty that did not exist before.

When the first class of 32 risk managers were designated as Certified Professionals in Aging Services Risk Management in October, they had something else in common as well—all the graduates were employed by either **Caring Communities**, a **Reciprocal Risk Retention Group**, or the **Peace Church Risk Retention Group**. About two years ago the leaders of the two RRGs joined forces with the **ECRI Institute**, a research organization for emergency care and healthcare management, to form the nonprofit **Center for Aging Services Risk Management (CASRM)**. The center's mission is to further research and education in the field of senior services risk management.

According to Caring Communities CEO Jim Caldwell, one of CASRM's founders, the **American Hospital Association's** certification for professionals in healthcare risk management was designed to train managers in the risks of providing acute care services. "The risks associated with caring for elders in the community and senior housing, and providing services for the care of seniors, are different," he told the *Risk Retention Reporter*. "Seniors living in communities are not experiencing acute care services, they are experiencing lifestyle services—and the risks are different. We wanted to have a curriculum that specialized in the risks akin to lifestyle services."

Caldwell and Philip Leaman, president and CEO of **Resource Partners**, the managing company for Peace Church RRG, sought out ECRI Institute Director of Aging Services Linda Wallace to work with them on developing a curriculum that would give senior facility risk managers a good grounding education in basic underwriting and claims management, along with an understanding of risk management and the culture of safety specific to providing senior services.

The focus on risk management is characteristic of the two RRGs' members. "At all our member organizations, this is really the core of who they are—their mission is to provide the safest environment possible for their members and the people in their care," Leaman said. "Not only does it make our RRG a successful organization, but it helps each of these organizations to impress on their staffs the culture of safety that is needed to provide quality services."

Linda Wallace added, "Any time you have a good working knowledge of the principles of risk management and the culture of safety, you have the ability to be proactive and predictive instead of reactive. I think that our risk managers really have a good understanding of their industry and what it takes to provide quality services."

While the program was being developed, Caring Communities and Peace Church sponsored onsite education programs for their members' facility risk managers. Now, according to Wallace, the center is converting the programs to a web-based curriculum that could be completed in about a year. Once the online program is released, CASRM plans to make it available to organizations that are not members of the two RRGs. "There are probably 7,000 to 8,000 senior communities with specialized risks associated with the care of elders," Caldwell said. "Through the foundation and the web-based curriculum we hope to take our work and make it available to the industry as a whole."

The center also is working with universities that offer degrees in aging services management to make the seven-course certification program part of their curriculum.

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