



Healthcare

# CAREFULLY SPEAKING®

A Risk Management Resource for Aging Services | 2026 Issue 1

## Reputation Management: A Key Component of Risk Control Strategies

In today's aging services industry, reputation is a critical determinant of organizational success. A positive reputation promotes stability by attracting new residents, stimulating growth, and supporting staff recruitment and retention efforts. A less-than-favorable reputation, on the other hand, can discourage potential residents, exacerbate staffing problems, weaken ties to the community, and increase liability exposure and regulatory scrutiny.

Adverse occurrences and lapses in care – which are themselves often rooted in such staff issues as high turnover, inadequate training and low morale – are the primary sources of reputational harm for aging services organizations. However, they are not the only causes. More subtle factors may be involved, including failure to meet resident/family expectations and to communicate proactively, resulting in complaints.

All these potential causes of reputational harm are amplified by underlying cultural, economic and legal shifts, such as:

- **More demanding and empowered consumers**, who have high expectations in regard to quality and are quick to complain if disappointed.
- **The Internet's ability to swiftly disseminate both positive and negative opinions of facilities**, as well as media accounts of untoward events.
- **Ever-increasing operational challenges**, including chronic workforce shortages as well as rising overall costs.
- **A more aggressive plaintiff bar**, leading to greater litigation and consequent negative publicity.
- **Changing models of resident care**, resulting in less clearly defined expectations and standards of care.

### In this issue...

- Strategies for Effective Reputation Management... [page 3](#).
- Reputation Management Policy: Five Core Components... [page 4](#).
- Quick Links to CNA Resources... [page 4](#).
- Checklist: Monitoring Online Reviews... [page 5](#).

If left unaddressed, these challenges can undermine confidence in the organization, potentially compromising its competitive position and long-term outlook.

To mitigate these risks, organizations should implement a comprehensive reputation management strategy, emphasizing ongoing communication with all stakeholders, including residents, families, providers, staff, community leaders, regulators and business partners. By maintaining a culture of transparency and accountability, leadership can foster trust, address concerns while they are still manageable, forestall unrealistic expectations and minimize potential misunderstandings.

This edition of *CareFully Speaking*® defines reputation management and underscores its critical role in minimizing liability and enhancing resident and family satisfaction. Also offered are strategies to strengthen communication, measure satisfaction, improve compliance, utilize technology effectively and otherwise work to maintain a positive image of the organization reflecting its commitment to quality care. Finally, a checklist on [page 5](#) provides guidance in monitoring and responding to online organizational reviews, which are a key source of potential reputational harm and associated loss exposures.

## Reputation Management Defined

*Reputation management* refers to coordinated, organization-wide initiatives designed to shape and sustain a positive public perception of the enterprise. This image is influenced by care outcomes, regulatory compliance and staff professionalism, as well as communication with stakeholders and the larger community.

Reputation management is a shared responsibility across an organization: leadership defines culture, employees build trust, and residents/families provide feedback. Through open, two-way communication and collaboration, all parties play a vital role in improving quality and satisfaction, thereby strengthening the organization's standing and helping them achieve key benchmarks, such as the following:

- **Increased trust among residents and families**, measured through satisfaction surveys and feedback forums.
- **Enhanced satisfaction and loyalty among stakeholders**, demonstrated by positive online reviews and testimonials.
- **Higher employee retention rates**, the sign of a healthy, supportive workplace.
- **Improved resident admission rates**, demonstrating a high level of community confidence.
- **Stronger partnerships with vendors and investors**, reflecting a widespread perception of reliability and trustworthiness.
- **Long-term financial stability**, bolstered by the organization's status as the setting of choice for prospective residents.

## The Importance of Communication

Clear, proactive communication is an essential ingredient in reputation management. By enabling leadership to manage resident/family expectations and prevent misunderstandings, effective communication policies can help reduce organizational liability. (For specific communication-related measures, see "Strategies for Effective Reputation Management" on [page 3](#).)

In addition, insurance companies recognize that organizations that prioritize consistent communication and actively promote a positive image are more likely to uphold high standards of care, respond promptly to concerns, and cultivate strong relationships with residents and families, thereby reducing the risk of claims.

## How Reputation Affects Liability

From a liability perspective, reputational harm can influence both litigation outcomes and regulatory scrutiny. While, as previously noted, resident injuries and other adverse occurrences are the most common and damaging source of negative publicity, they are not the only one. Other possible sources of reputational harm and consequent liability include the following:

- **Failure to adhere to clinical guidelines** and other protocols.
- **Financial and operational incidents**, including fraudulent billing allegations and related disputes.
- **Legal and regulatory noncompliance**, including violations of HIPAA rules and CMS requirements.
- **Technology-related issues**, including data loss, security breaches and IT system failures.
- **Lack of safety protocols for emerging risks**, including artificial intelligence-directed and remote care.

## Assessing Internal and External Feedback

When residents and families offer positive reviews, based upon their own experiences, they strengthen an organization's reputation, thereby helping attract and retain residents. Negative feedback, meanwhile, is most constructively viewed as a valuable source of insight about resident concerns and issues that need to be addressed.

To ensure continuous improvement and benefit from both positive and negative feedback, aging services organizations should regularly assess resident and family satisfaction. Key indicators to monitor include the following, among others:

- **Quality of care** and services.
- **Staff responsiveness** and empathy.
- **Respect for autonomy**, privacy and dignity.
- **Personal safety** and security.
- **Cleanliness and comfort** of personal and communal spaces.
- **The variety and quality of activities**, amenities and food.

Along with direct surveys, aging services settings should monitor feedback on external sites. For practical suggestions on tracking and responding to online feedback, see the second column of the "Strategies for Effective Reputation Management" chart on [page 3](#), as well as the "Checklist: Monitoring Online Reviews" on [page 5](#).

### Compliance and Risk Control Considerations

Compliance with regulatory requirements – such as HIPAA privacy rules, state reporting statutes and directives from federal agencies – is not only a legal obligation, but also a critical aspect of reputation management. By consistently meeting these standards, organizations can avoid fines, penalties and legal action, all of which are potentially costly and damaging to the organization's reputation.

To protect themselves from harm, it is good practice for organizations to integrate reputation management principles – including proactive risk assessment, ongoing monitoring of satisfaction levels and effective response measures – into their compliance and risk management frameworks. By aligning reputation management activities with other risk control objectives, administrators can establish policies and procedures that minimize both financial and reputational exposure. Some of these measures are described in the table below.

## Strategies for Effective Reputation Management

 <b>Enhance Communication</b>	 <b>Monitor and Respond</b>	 <b>Leverage Technology</b>	 <b>Disclose Issues Promptly</b>
<p><b>Establish transparent communication channels</b> to convey the organization's values, mission and clinical expectations to all stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Deliver ongoing staff training</b> focused on effective two-way communication and openness to feedback.</p> <p><b>Train staff in crisis management skills</b>, i.e., responding to negative situations or reviews.</p> <p><b>Continually monitor staff-resident/family interactions</b> to identify areas for improvement.</p> <p><b>Establish a formal system to recognize, reinforce and reward provision of quality care</b> and instances of teamwork, effective communication and empathy.</p> <p><b>Appoint staff members as brand ambassadors</b> to promote organizational mission, values and accomplishments.</p>	<p><b>Utilize monitoring tools to track social media mentions</b> across social media platforms, review sites and mass media outlets.</p> <p><b>Track reputation-related indicators</b>, such as resident/family satisfaction, staff engagement and public perception.</p> <p><b>Regularly report on social media activity</b> and sentiment to organizational ownership/leadership.</p> <p><b>Promptly respond to negative feedback online</b> and discuss these exchanges in performance improvement forums.</p> <p><b>Engage a public relations firm</b> to help analyze feedback and execute a response strategy.</p> <p><b>Implement a crisis communication plan</b> to respond to negative publicity or misinformation.</p>	<p><b>Conduct regular electronic surveys of residents and families</b> using secure, anonymous platforms to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p><b>Share positive stories and testimonials across multiple channels</b>, including the organization's website, social media platforms, e-newsletters and local media.</p> <p><b>Utilize reputation management software featuring sentiment analysis</b>, automated alerts of negative posts and dashboard reporting.</p> <p><b>Carefully select reputation management software</b>, adopting tools that enable prompt, consistent responses to negative feedback.</p> <p><b>Choose software that integrates seamlessly with outside social media platforms</b> and internal applications designed to promote resident/family engagement.</p>	<p><b>Develop a rapid disclosure protocol for emerging issues</b>, noting specific spokespersons, communication timelines and incident reporting procedures.</p> <p><b>Ensure that crisis-related communications are straightforward and easy to understand</b>, and also that they provide factual, up-to-date reports to counteract any false or misleading information in circulation.</p> <p><b>Actively engage residents, families, staff and other stakeholders</b> through various communication channels during crisis situations, in order to quell rumors and maintain trust among key audiences.</p> <p><b>Brief staff, residents, families and other stakeholders about clinical errors</b>, near-misses and other adverse occurrences, thus providing closure for these events.</p>

### Assessment Metrics

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are quantifiable criteria that enable organizations to assess the effectiveness of their reputation management strategies. By regularly tracking and analyzing the following KPIs, among others, organizations can identify trends, note weaknesses, create data-based improvement plans, and stay ahead of damaging complaints and negative publicity:

- **Satisfaction scores**, which measure resident and family experiences with services and staff.
- **Online reputation metrics**, which track the volume, quality and star ratings of online reviews.
- **Resident retention rates**, which indicate satisfaction and loyalty among residents and families.
- **Complaint resolution time**, which gauges the organization's efficiency in addressing and resolving negative feedback.
- **Frequency of lawsuits**, which may reflect underlying clinical or operational issues that potentially affect not only liability exposure, but also organizational repute.

Maintaining a positive image is crucial to success. This involves fostering a culture of resident safety and satisfaction; conveying this commitment to residents, families and the greater community; and actively seeking out and responding to feedback. By developing a formal reputation management strategy and treating it as part of overall risk mitigation and quality improvement efforts, organizations can help strengthen relationships with stakeholders, attract new residents, enhance their stature within the community and achieve greater long-term stability.

### Reputation Management Policy: Five Core Components

1. **Establish a formal reputation management program** overseen by organizational leadership.
2. **Train staff in effective communication** and hold regular meetings to discuss reputation management strategies.
3. **Develop effective feedback mechanisms for residents and family members**, as well as a formal complaint resolution process.
4. **Institute standardized response protocols** and complaint escalation procedures.
5. **Review the reputation management program annually**, update policies as needed, and promptly communicate changes to residents/families, providers, staff and all stakeholders.

### Quick Links to CNA Resources

- *AlertBulletin*® 2025-Issue 2, "[Change of Condition in Residents: Enhancing Detection and Response.](#)"
- *AlertBulletin*® 2024-Issue 4, "[Serious Adverse Events: Creating a Sound Crisis Response Plan.](#)"
- *CareFully Speaking*® 2025-Issue 1, "[Workplace Security: Common Measures to Safeguard Residential Environments.](#)"
- *CareFully Speaking*® 2023-Issue 2, "[New Models of Care: A Look at Five Aging Services Trends and Challenges.](#)"

**Develop effective feedback mechanisms for residents and family members, as well as a formal complaint resolution process.**

## Checklist: Monitoring Online Reviews

The following checklist, which supplements the “Strategies for Effective Reputation Management” table on [page 3](#), is intended to help aging services leadership create a sound system for managing online reviews or to revise an existing process. It can be modified or expanded to suit specific organizational needs.

### Verify organizational listings

- Identify social media review platforms that need to be monitored on a regular basis**, e.g., Caring.com, Healthgrades, Medicare.gov, Google Reviews.
- Regularly check that the organization’s name, address, phone number and website are accurately listed** across all social media review platforms.
- Promptly correct any inconsistencies** or outdated information discovered online.

### Encourage and proactively monitor feedback

- Invite residents and families to share feedback** and reviews about their experiences.
- Publicize social media review platforms**, using posters, flyers and QR codes in residential areas.
- Assign a dedicated individual or team to check internal social media sites** for recent postings.
- Monitor relevant external review sites** for mentions and comments, preferably on a daily basis.

### Utilize effective reputation-management tools

- Select tools that streamline the monitoring process** and are designed to manage online presence across multiple platforms, such as Birdeye or Dignified Online, among others.
- Establish clear criteria for selecting tools**, prioritizing capabilities such as real-time review monitoring, automated review requests, and robust analytics for tracking resident and family feedback trends.
- Configure monitoring apps to issue instant alerts** for all new mentions across key social media and review platforms.

### Respond in a timely manner

- Assign primary responsibility for responding to online reviews, if necessary, to a single trained individual**, with at least one designated backup.
- Utilize standardized response templates** to ensure consistency, professionalism and clarity.
- Acknowledge and validate the reviewer’s concerns** and offer constructive solutions, where applicable.
- Invite reviewers to continue the conversation privately**, via a dedicated phone line or e-mail account.

### Comply with privacy requirements

- Avoid disclosing any protected health information (PHI) in responses**, making clear that the HIPAA Privacy Rule prohibits online discussion of PHI.
- Do not confirm or acknowledge online whether an individual is or was a resident**, as doing so may disclose PHI and constitute a HIPAA violation.
- Do not confirm a resident’s or family member’s name** in any response to online reviews.
- Do not mention dates of care**, medical conditions, diagnoses or treatments in responses.
- Refrain from disclosing billing or insurance information**, or any other detail that could be used to identify an individual.

## Objectively assess negative feedback

- Investigate negative reviews internally to assess their accuracy.
- Identify specific providers, staff members or clinical processes associated with negative comments, and draft follow-up plans that include corrective actions.
- Regularly analyze trends in online feedback to identify areas for improvement.
- Utilize feedback as a tool for staff training and process improvement.

## Respond properly to critical reviews

- Create a standardized protocol/template for handling negative feedback that does the following:
  - Acknowledges the reviewer's concern(s).
  - Uses approved language.
  - Complies with HIPAA privacy regulations.
  - Escalates complex cases when necessary.
- Express sympathy for any negative experience, without apologizing for any specific action.
- Reiterate the organization's dedication to quality care and resident safety.
- Respond to comments in a calm, civil manner, taking care to avoid a defensive or argumentative tone.

## Request removal, when appropriate

- Review the respective platform's policy regarding removal of an online review, as well as its general terms of service.
- Gather evidence proving that the negative review breaches platform guidelines, such as prohibitions on hate speech, threats, explicit language, private information or false/defamatory statements.
- Contact the review site and follow the procedure for requesting removal, citing evidence to support the claim.
- Assign a staff member to track the request, follow up regularly with the platform and document all communications until resolution.

This checklist serves as a reference for aging services organizations seeking to evaluate risk exposures associated with online reviews. The content is not intended to represent a comprehensive listing of all actions needed to address the subject matter, but rather is a means of initiating internal discussion and self-examination. Your organization and risks may be different from those addressed herein, and you may wish to modify the activities noted herein to suit your individual organizational practice and resident needs. The information contained herein is not intended to establish any standard of care, or address the circumstances of any specific organization. It is not intended to serve as legal advice appropriate for any particular factual situation, or to provide an acknowledgement that any given factual situation is covered under any CNA insurance policy. The material presented is not intended to constitute a binding contract. These statements do not constitute a risk management directive from CNA. No organization or individual should act upon this information without appropriate professional advice, including advice of legal counsel, given after a thorough examination of the individual situation, encompassing a review of relevant facts, laws and regulations. CNA assumes no responsibility for the consequences of the use or nonuse of this information.

Did someone forward this newsletter to you? If you would like to receive future issues of *CareFully Speaking*® by email, please register for a complimentary subscription at [go.cna.com/HCSUBSCRIBE](https://go.cna.com/HCSUBSCRIBE).

### Editorial Board Members

Kelly J. Taylor, RN, JD, *Chair*  
 Jenn Andriany  
 Janna Bennett, CPHRM  
 Allen Bosch, CPCU, ARM  
 Elisa Brown, FCAS  
 Molly Connors, Esq.  
 Blaine Thomas  
 Natalie Wynegar, MBA, LNHA

### Publisher

Michelle O'Neill, MN, MBA, PhD,  
 CPHRM, CPPS

### Editor

Hugh Iglarsh, MA

For more information, please visit [www.cna.com/healthcare](https://www.cna.com/healthcare).

The information, examples and suggestions presented in this material have been developed from sources believed to be reliable, but they should not be construed as legal or other professional advice. CNA accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this material and recommends the consultation with competent legal counsel and/or other professional advisors before applying this material in any particular factual situation. Please note that Internet links cited herein are active as of the date of publication, but may be subject to change or discontinuation and are provided solely for convenience. CNA does not make any representations, endorsements, or assurances about content contained on any website referred to herein or on the accuracy of any of the content contained on third party websites. The views, statements, and materials contained on the website are those of the owner of the site. This material is for illustrative purposes and is not intended to constitute a contract. Please remember that only the relevant insurance policy can provide the actual terms, coverages, amounts, conditions and exclusions for an insured. All products and services may not be available in all states and may be subject to change without notice. Certain CNA Financial Corporation subsidiaries use the "CNA" service mark in connection with insurance underwriting and claims activities. Copyright © 2026 CNA. All rights reserved. Published 6/26. CNA CS26-1.

