

# Growing as a Risk Professional:

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL CHAPTERS

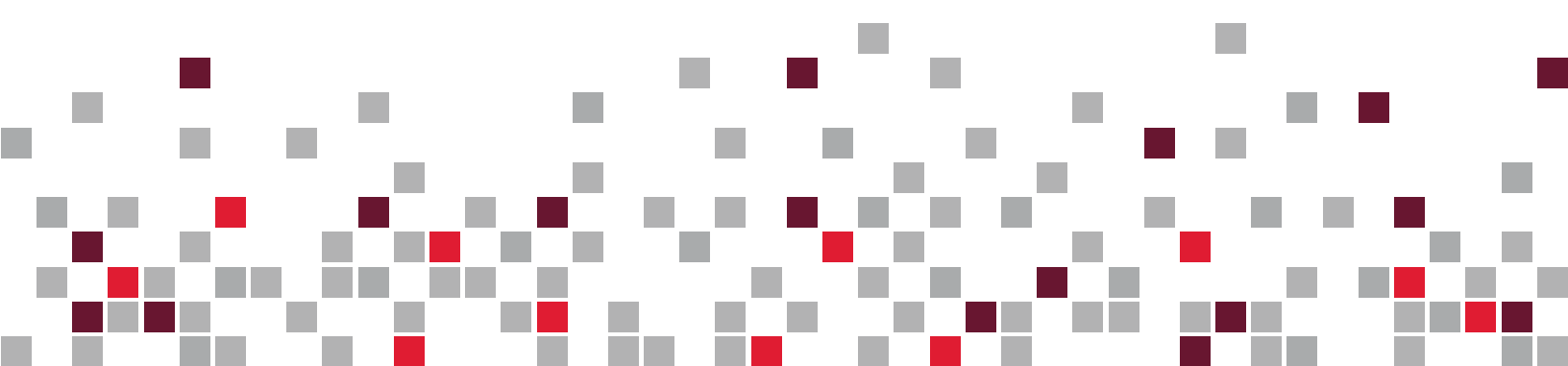


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## INTRODUCTION

Professional associations play an integral role in professional development, yet many risk professionals do not know of or fully utilize local or state professional associations. By joining and actively engaging with a local professional association, risk professionals can learn about emerging risks and state rules and regulations impacting the health care industry and the risk management field from local subject matter experts. The local professional association will provide up-to-date information on federal and/or state legislation, local claims trend data, practice changes, and hot topics relevant to the risk professional. Many local associations host job boards and often provide educational opportunities to help build leadership skills. This paper seeks to identify and inform the risk professional on the various benefits of joining and becoming involved in their local professional association.

The American Society for Health Care Risk Management (ASHRM) has recognized local chapters. Some of these associations serve multiple states (e.g., the Northern New England chapter), and some states have multiple chapters, such as the California Society for Healthcare Risk Management, the San Diego Association for Healthcare Risk Management, and the Southern California Association for Healthcare Risk Management. Risk professionals should look for a chapter serving their area. Throughout this paper, we refer to these local associations as “local chapters.”

This paper delves into the benefits of belonging to and being active in a local chapter. Active engagement at the local level will uncover various opportunities for the risk professional to participate in committees, give presentations, build leadership skills and a professional network, get to know other risk professionals, and maximize their chapter membership benefits.

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## ASHRM CHAPTER WEBSITE ANALYSIS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE REVIEW

In this nationwide analysis, 35 local chapter websites were reviewed to examine the number of educational offerings, committee structures, local events, sponsorship opportunities, membership fees, and additional offerings such as newsletters, blogs, job postings, quick resource links, on-demand webinars, mentorship programs, and professional recognition. The analysis involved viewing chapter websites without being a member of the 35 chapters, thereby capturing the information available to risk professionals who are considering joining these chapters. Some chapters may offer additional member benefits not listed on their websites.

A literature search was done using the keywords *professional society*, *professional associations*, *mentoring*, *networking*, *volunteering*, and *professional development*. Only articles on volunteering, mentoring, and professional development that were directly related to professional organizations were selected for inclusion in this analysis.

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## CHAPTER MEMBER BENEFITS

The nationwide website review identified varying chapter member benefits. In addition, several chapters were part of the state hospital association and did not have individual websites. Several local chapters listed professional recognitions and awards, and all offered educational events.

The literature search returned numerous scholarly and opinion articles on the benefits of professional organizations. Several articles discussed challenges with professional organizations' member engagement and various ways to engage members. Others focused on member benefits and maximizing membership. All the articles were conclusive that belonging to and participating in a professional organization benefits the professional by providing opportunities for growth and development.

### Education and Professional Development

Education is essential to all risk professionals.<sup>1,2</sup> Local chapters offer education to promote professional development so the risk professional can stay up-to-date on what is happening in the health care industry and learn about the newest federal and state potential legislative developments, claims trends, practice changes, and current events. Most of the local chapters in this analysis provide continuing education credits that can be used to fulfill requirements for the Fellow of the American Society for Health Care Risk Management (FASHRM) and Distinguished Fellow of the American Society for Health Care Risk Management (DFASHRM) designations and for Certified Professional in Health Care Risk Management (CPHRM) renewal.

As a bonus, many local chapters have modified the traditional in-person educational sessions to include hybrid conferences or to record in-person presentations for later viewing. Others offer on-demand webinars and virtual round table discussions.

Depending on the local chapter, the membership fee may include free and/or reduced-cost education. This provides members with more affordable means of obtaining the necessary continuing education credits for CPHRM renewal and state licensing requirements. Local chapters may also give member discounts for regional conferences or local chapter social events.

The local chapter is a great place to give back and share risk management knowledge by giving presentations on risk management topics. Sharing knowledge through presentations to other risk professionals helps contribute to the risk management profession, and for those pursuing FASHRM and/or DFASHRM designation, it also helps fulfil the designation's requirements.

Joining the local chapter education committee is an excellent starting point for risk management professionals who are looking to become involved. There are varying levels of participation, and it is a great way to meet new people, grow one's network, and make a meaningful contribution to the profession.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is an important aspect of professional growth.<sup>3,4,5</sup> ASHRM has recognized the importance of mentorship for the advancement of risk professionals and has made it part of the organization's 2022–2024 strategic plan.<sup>6</sup> Several local chapters have mentoring programs.

Mentorship has many benefits for both the mentor and the mentee. For mentors, it boosts interpersonal skills and strengthens knowledge. Being a mentor helps establish or expand leadership skills. It adds to one's qualifications and enables one to gain new perspectives. It is also a way to give back to the profession by helping to elevate it.

For the mentee, a mentor can be of great importance. Having a mentor supports professional growth.<sup>7,8,9</sup> The mentor serves as a source of knowledge and can help fill gaps the mentee may not have even realized existed. Having a mentor builds a trusted relationship, helps the mentee set realistic goals, and provides accountability. A mentor can help the mentee develop their professional network and become active with their local chapter and nationally with ASHRM. Additionally, mentoring helps build future industry leaders.<sup>10,11</sup>

Mentoring programs can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Mentoring relationships take time to develop but are instrumental for the advancement of the risk professional.<sup>12</sup> Many local chapters have developed specific mentoring programs to welcome new members into the organization. The assignment of a mentor for a new member eases the transition into the organization, aids in networking, and provides the new member direction with respect to the chapter's educational resources. This benefit can also assist in increasing chapter membership.

## Committees

Membership is the initial step in becoming involved with a local chapter. The next important step is taking an active role in the local chapter by volunteering for committees, writing articles for association publications, and providing presentations at the chapter and/or regional conferences.

Local chapters offer several options for committee participation. The committees or task forces, as they may be termed depending on the chapter, generally include the following.

### ■ EDUCATION

If you are new to the local chapter, volunteering on the local chapter Education Committee is an excellent way to get involved. In general, the Education Committee is responsible for identifying topics and/or speakers for the chapter conferences, webinars, and educational programs relating to current concepts in health care risk management, clinical and patient safety, risk financing, legal and regulatory requirements, health care operations, claims, and litigation.

As one of the purposes of the local chapter is to provide continuing education and professional development for members, the local chapter Education Committee works to meet the continuing education unit (CEU) requirements for CPHRM renewal and for the FASHRM and DFASHRM designations. Some local chapters may offer CEUs to meet state nursing or other health care provider licensure renewals. Although not all states require continuing education for licensure renewal, those that do may accept ASHRM's CEUs.

### ■ FINANCE

The local chapter Finance Committee provides oversight of the budget and the allocation of resources and expenditures, working with the elected local chapter treasurer. The committee members work with the chapter treasurer to prepare the chapter's annual budget and year-end fiscal report, which are presented to the local chapter board of directors for approval and then shared with the local chapter membership.

## ■ BYLAWS

The local chapter Bylaws Committee is responsible for reviewing the local chapter bylaws at least biennially and recommending necessary changes or revisions to the local chapter board. The local chapter Bylaws Committee reviews and makes recommendations regarding operational policies and procedures as directed by the local chapter board.

## ■ MEMBERSHIP

The local chapter Membership Committee actively strategizes and encourages recruitment and retention of members, seeking opportunities to recruit members from all clinical settings and to spread information on the benefits of local chapter membership to all interested parties.

## ■ LEGISLATIVE

The local chapter Legislative Committee identifies and informs members of relevant state and federal legislative issues that may impact health care risk professionals and the health care industry.

## ■ NOMINATING

The local chapter Nominating Committee accepts nominations from the chapter membership, identifies potential candidates, and submits a slate of candidates for the open positions for the following year, such as president-elect, secretary, treasurer, board members, and committee members. The local chapter Nominating Committee strives to identify a slate that includes individuals from diverse backgrounds, members who work in various sectors of the health care risk management profession, patient safety representatives, legal and claims specialists, and members representing all geographic areas of the state. The local chapter Nominating Committee then presents the ballot to the membership for voting and/or approval.

## ■ SPONSORSHIP

The local chapter Sponsorship Committee identifies and requests support from professional services and vendors that support the health care industry and risk professionals to increase awareness of the products and services available to local chapter members. Additionally, sponsorship helps keep the dues low for members and, in large part, provides the financial resources necessary for a robust educational agenda and in-person conferences.

## **Leadership Opportunities**

A local chapter has many opportunities for involvement.<sup>13</sup> In addition, a risk professional who strives to obtain FASHRM and/or DFASHRM designation needs to hold certain leadership positions before being eligible to apply. The following leadership functions are generalized and may differ slightly according to the local chapters' bylaws.

## ■ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board positions may vary in number; some local chapters have four, while others list fewer positions. Generally, the terms of office are two years. Local chapter board members typically have the power to develop the chapter's plans, objectives, and purposes. They establish standing and ad hoc committees that align with the goals and objectives to implement the chapter's programs. In addition, they review the recommendations of the local chapter committees listed previously and select the dates, locations, formats, and programs of local chapter meetings and other educational events.

Officers' positions may vary slightly depending on the local chapter, but most include a three-year commitment if running for the presidency, which includes acting as president-elect for one year, president for one year, and past president for one year. Additionally, the board includes a treasurer and a secretary, both of whom generally serve a two-year term that may be extended with chapter board approval. The following section reviews each position and its general duties, but the risk management professional should consult with the local chapter for specific information about that organization's structure when deciding to participate.

### ■ PRESIDENT-ELECT

The local chapter president-elect is responsible for stepping in when a president cannot fulfill their duties. Additionally, they may serve as the chair of a committee such as those listed previously, participate on a committee, help plan a regional conference, or even oversee special projects. The analysis of local chapters showed that this position varies the most in its duties and responsibilities. In many chapters, the president-elect chairs the Education Committee and is responsible for planning and coordinating all education events, including any annual or semi-annual in-person educational conferences.

### ■ PRESIDENT

The president of a local chapter generally acts as the chair of the board, presides at all meetings, and is responsible for submitting an annual report to the members. The president represents the local chapter at the ASHRM Annual Conference. Additionally, the president meets with the ASHRM liaison to further the chapter's objectives and ASHRM's mission.

### ■ PAST PRESIDENT

The past president position is not included in all local chapters. The duties typically entail overseeing bylaws, nominations, and policies and providing mentorship to the current president.

### ■ TREASURER

A local chapter treasurer is usually responsible for maintaining the local chapter's financial records, filing state or federal reports, and providing financial statements to the board regularly and to the members annually.

### ■ SECRETARY

The local chapter secretary is usually responsible for maintaining the minutes and records of the local chapter, maintaining the repository of previous minutes and records, and disseminating or ensuring members' access to information. Additionally, many secretaries serve on other committees, such as the Nominating Committee.

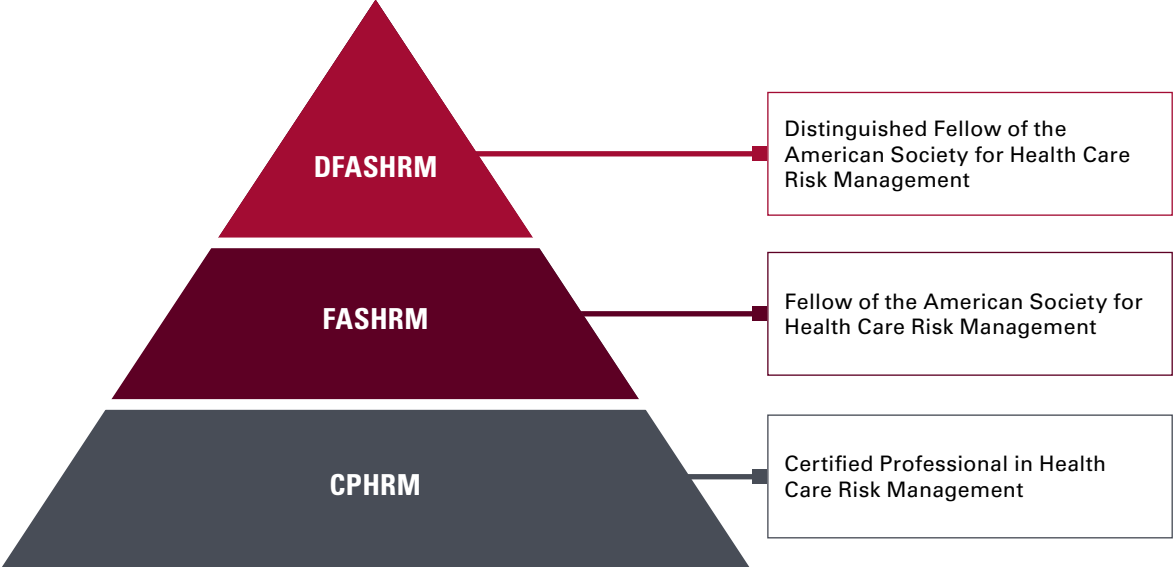
### ■ COMMITTEE CHAIR

In addition to the officer positions, there are several opportunities for leadership on various local chapter committees. While each local chapter has different types of committees, most require a chair to coordinate and oversee the activities carried out by the specific committee.

# Requirements for FASHRM and DFASHRM Designations

ASHRM has two distinguished designations: FASHRM for outstanding achievement and DFASHRM for superior achievement. A local chapter is an essential ally for risk professionals seeking the FASHRM and DFASHRM designations. This section summarizes the requirements for both designations.<sup>14</sup> Members who are applying for either designation should see ASHRM’s website ([www.ashrm.org](http://www.ashrm.org)) for the most complete and current requirements and not rely solely on this overview for information.

## ASHRM’s Professional Development Pyramid



Eligibility for FASHRM requires the risk professional to be a current ASHRM member for a minimum of five of the seven years prior to the year in which they apply. The risk professional must have the CPHRM designation and at least two other academic or professional designations (a list is available on the ASHRM website), at least five years of risk management experience, and at least 75 continuing education units or contact hours.<sup>15</sup>

Eligibility for DFASHRM requires the risk professional to be a current ASHRM member for a minimum of 10 of the 12 years prior to the year in which they apply. The risk professional must have the CPHRM designation and at least two other academic or professional designations, at least 10 years of risk management experience, and at least 150 continuing education contact hours in the last 10 years.<sup>16</sup>

The final requirement is related to contributions to the profession in three categories: leadership, publishing, and lecturing. For FASHRM, the risk professional must meet all the requirements in any two of these three categories. For the DFASHRM designation, the risk professional must meet the requirements in all three categories.<sup>17</sup>



## ■ LEADERSHIP

A risk professional must provide at least two examples of risk management leadership positions within the past 10 years that are not part of their routine job responsibility. This is where involvement with the local chapter is key. The risk professional can meet this requirement by serving and completing their obligation as a local chapter officer, board member, or committee chair. Other applicable leadership roles are listed on the ASHRM website.

## ■ PUBLISHING

Many types of publications that meet the requirements for the publishing category are listed on the ASHRM website. The article or chapter must relate to patient safety or risk management and cannot be part of the applicant's routine job descriptions or requirements/expectations. Additionally, the publication must be peer-reviewed.

## ■ LECTURING

To meet the requirements for lecturing, the risk professional must provide two examples of presentations given that are not part of the applicant's routine job responsibility. Giving a presentation at a local chapter qualifies since CEUs are offered. However, this is not the only option; lecturing could be done in various ASHRM environments or for other professional societies.

## Networking

Networking through the local chapter is a means to build and maintain relationships with other risk professionals. Relationships like these are essential for the continual growth of one's professional skills and knowledge base, as well as for general career support and mentorship. Networking is for everyone, at every level and in every type of health care organization.<sup>18</sup>

Networking at the local level allows one to meet new people, such as risk professionals, brokers, defense counsel, or even vendors. It provides an opportunity to learn about new/open positions, whether as part of the local chapter meeting announcements, through postings on the local chapter website, in emails to the chapter members, or by word of mouth at the local chapter meetings.

Attending and participating in the local chapter meetings can help build professional contacts, which allows the risk professional to make a quick call to a colleague for their input into a challenging risk management situation or to ask if other risk professionals are seeing a trend identified in one's own organization. Professional contacts can also serve as a professional reference for a new position or in applications for FASHRM or DFASHRM designation.

Another benefit of networking through the local chapter is the social events, such as member appreciation events. These events may include educational presentations, panel discussions on topics of interest to the local chapter, or simply opportunities for socializing. They are excellent opportunities to get to know others on an informal basis and relax with colleagues.<sup>19,20,21</sup>

## Chapter Resources

A direct benefit of being an active member of a local chapter is the opportunity to ask for sample policies, procedures, and materials that can be modified to meet an organization's needs, such as sample signage for patients and visitors on behavioral expectations to reduce verbal abuse or workplace violence, policies addressing implicit bias for patients and staff, or sample job descriptions, consistent with state rules and regulations.

Several local chapters schedule monthly collaborative calls to discuss industry developments, review regulatory and accreditation standards, share experiences, and collaborate on “how to handle it” questions. The collaborative calls give members a valuable opportunity to collaborate with risk professionals with a range of experience and backgrounds. Given that the landscape of health care is continually evolving, new and seasoned members can benefit from the calls.

Many of the local chapter websites include links to relevant information or organizations, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) resources, The Joint Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), state health department resources, risk management resources, accreditation and regulatory standards, and state-specific case law.

Many local chapter websites have a library of educational webinars, previous member inquiries/surveys and responses, and relevant articles or archived resources. Other chapters provide a president’s report or chapter newsletter to members on a routine basis to announce events and other chapter projects, as well as case law updates.

Additionally, many local chapters offer scholarships to members that can be used for a local chapter meeting, annual chapter dues, CPHRM certification, or even attendance at the ASHRM Annual Conference. This benefit provides opportunities for education and growth that many would otherwise not find affordable.

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## **ASHRM SUPPORT**

This paper has extensively discussed the benefits of engagement with the local chapter. ASHRM support is essential for the success of these local chapters. ASHRM mentors the local chapter leaders with quarterly check-in calls to discuss individual chapter status and concerns. The ASHRM Advisory Board also meets with local chapter leaders at the Annual Conference to provide support and advice.

On request, a member of the ASHRM Advisory Board, if available, will present at the regional or local chapter meetings/conferences to provide an update on ASHRM and to encourage chapter and national member engagement.

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## **NATIONAL-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES**

Active engagement with the local chapter is a gateway to becoming more involved at the national level. This section reviews opportunities to become involved at the national level by volunteering for ASHRM task forces or committees.<sup>22</sup>

### **ASHRM New Member Task Force**

The New Member Task Force members reach out to new members via telephone or, if preferred by the new member, by email to welcome them to ASHRM and answer questions the new members may have about the organization. The task force provides information on ASHRM resources, such as the interactive members-only ASHRM Exchange for discussion of hot topics, podcasts, white papers, playbooks, and upcoming webinars.

## ASHRM Education Development Task Force

The Education Development Task Force leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of ASHRM's virtual educational programs designed to meet member needs in alignment with ASHRM's educational strategy and curriculum map.

## ASHRM Educational Scholarship Task Force

Members of the Educational Scholarship Task Force review applicants for the many ASHRM scholarships and advise the ASHRM board of candidates who should be awarded a scholarship to ASHRM's live educational events, such as the ASHRM Annual Conference, ASHRM Academy, and ASHRM Express.

## ASHRM Forum News Task Force

Forum News Task Force members solicit, write, review and edit articles for the ASHRM Forum. Local chapter members have access to the articles for the ASHRM Forum, which are available on the ASHRM website and include topics in the varied domains of enterprise risk management, such as [Civil vs. Criminal Indictments – What You Need to Know](#), [Protecting Patient Possessions](#), [Identifying Implicit Bias in Health Care](#), [Lessons Learned as a Risk Manager Patient During the Pandemic](#), and [Making Hospital Supply Chain Disruptions Manageable Inconveniences](#).

## ASHRM Journal Editorial Review Board

The ASHRM journal publishes research and analysis that expands the literature and advances the practice of health care risk management. Review board members solicit, peer-review, and edit articles for the quarterly *Journal of Healthcare Risk Management*. Editorial review board members need to have expertise in one or more of the following areas: evidence-based health care risk management, enterprise risk management, clinical risk management, patient safety, quality improvement, risk financing, claims and litigation, health care preparedness, risk management tools and techniques, the health care risk management workforce, and other timely risk management issues.

## ASHRM Chapter Leadership Task Force

Chapter Leadership Task Force members develop and implement plans to create a mutually beneficial and supportive relationship between ASHRM and local chapters. The Chapter Leadership Task Force develops and delivers the chapter leader workshop at the Annual Conference, hosts chapter leader webinars, and may develop other chapter resources and communications. The chapter leaders share information and challenges via the Chapter Leader Discussion Board located in the ASHRM Exchange. The chapter leaders may access the chapter leader library, which contains updated chapter administration tools, such as annual reporting forms, sample documents and templates, and information about the other chapter benefits and resources provided by ASHRM.

Queries on the Chapter Leader Discussion Board include questions about the chapters' plans for in-person, virtual, or hybrid (both in-person and virtual) meetings and educational programs, discussion on the cost-benefit analysis of a paid administrative assistant or executive director for the chapter, requests for sponsorship and vendor policies/guidelines, and announcements highlighting upcoming ASHRM awards, scholarship programs, and publication opportunities.

## ASHRM Patient Safety Task Force

Members of the Patient Safety Task Force develop and implement strategies and tactics to enhance ASHRM's relevance in the patient safety arena to achieve the goals outlined in ASHRM's strategic plan. The strategies and tactics include resources for Patient Safety Awareness Week, such as patient safety tip sheets, tools, and checklists on topics including agency contracts, wellness, communication of lab results, transfer to higher-acuity facilities, and prevention of wrong-site surgery.

## ASHRM Annual Conference Committee

Annual Conference Committee members are responsible for selecting the program content for the Annual Conference. They review and select submissions on the basis of interest to the attendees, future-facing topics, and applicability across all clinical settings.

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## ASHRM RESOURCES

In addition to the ASHRM member benefits, numerous resources are available, such as the ASHRM Exchange, a members-only discussion board for ASHRM members to submit inquiries/surveys on practices, sample policies, and practice recommendations and to get support for changes affecting risk professionals. A library in the ASHRM Exchange contains sample policies, templates, forms, tools, and other resources. ASHRM members have access to the *Journal of Healthcare Risk Management*, which "publishes research, trends, and new developments in the field of health care risk management."<sup>23</sup> There are also discounts on ASHRM publications and national conference registration for ASHRM members.

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## CONCLUSION

The benefits of joining and participating in a local chapter are both professional and personal.

Among the professional benefits for the risk professional are increased knowledge, whether the risk professional is new to the field or highly experienced; recommendations to take back to one's organization; expansion of a professional library through queries for sample policies and procedures; professional networking with other risk professionals who speak a shared language and have shared experiences; and opportunities for career advancement such as through CPHRM certification and designations such as FASHRM and DFASHRM. The personal benefits are also invaluable and include increasing contacts, finding mentors, and developing lifelong relationships with other risk professionals. Once active in the local chapter, it is common for a risk professional to also become active with ASHRM at the national level through participation on ASHRM's national task forces or committees.

The benefits are numerous, and a risk professional who is actively engaged will help promote the profession and find support and resources to help with professional development and fulfillment in this diverse field.

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