



# Emergency Succession Planning: A New Risk Management To Do

**Resource Type:** Articles

**Topic:** HR Risk and Employment Practices

CEO succession has grown to a front-burner issue for nonprofit boards, as [Transition Guides](#) and similar organizations have increased awareness of the critical importance of planning for CEO turnover. The risk of departure by a valued executive director is common to most organizations. Yet, much of the discussion and focus is on the recruitment of a new CEO following the retirement or voluntary resignation of a nonprofit's top paid staff member. Little attention has been devoted to the risk of a sudden CEO departure.

That perspective is being changed by the Washington, DC-based [Center for Nonprofit Advancement](#). CNA has taken an important step to broaden the perspective by developing an [Emergency Succession Plan Template](#). The Nonprofit Risk Management Center was pleased to be one of the organizations that lent a hand as the template took shape.

During CNA's review of studies on executive leadership, the organization's leaders noticed a pattern: while more organizations are grappling with the responsibilities of an anticipated change in leadership, few have planned for an **emergency** change in leadership — short term or long term. CNA viewed this lack of action as a call to action for the association.

The purpose of the template is to define the contents of such a plan, and make this essential document easy and painless to adapt and implement. The template includes plans for short-term, long-term and permanent executive director changes. A specific name or selection criteria would be established to select an acting executive director. A communications plan would be established to notify board members, funders and other key stakeholders. The template also includes a thorough contact inventory. This will allow your organization to take important scattered information and place it all in one document? vital information in case of an emergency departure by the CEO/executive director.

No matter the age, health or happiness of the current leader, all organizations — small, large, new, or established — should be prepared for a sudden, unplanned change at the helm. Look to the Emergency Succession Plan Template to assist your organization in doing so.

The template is designed to remove some of the barriers nonprofit organizations encounter during an unexpected leadership change. The template is available at no cost at the following link: [www.nonprofitadvancement.org/template](http://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/template).