

Public Health Decision-Making Tool

This tool is intended to support executive decision-making to protect the public from a potential public health threat by posing questions to evaluate risk of taking action based on information currently known or understood vs. waiting to act while obtaining more information to inform decisions.

SITUATION	What are the facts? Describe the facts as known/understood at this time.
SITUATION	Based on these facts: What is the threat? What is the potential “danger” or “threat”? (List each, may include, for example, potential disease(s) or condition(s)).
CONSEQUENCES	What are the consequences? If danger or threat occurs, what are potential consequences? (i.e. “list of horrors”).
LIKELIHOOD	What are the chances of occurrence? Determine the likelihood of the occurrence of each danger or threat based on current evidence.



MITIGATION	How can the threat be addressed? What measures or mitigation might be used to address each potential danger or threat?
CERTAINTY	Should you take action now? What is potential harm in implementing measures or mitigation prematurely ? (i.e. risk associated with acting based on current evidence). List the pros and cons of acting versus waiting. What additional evidence would be helpful? What is the timeframe to obtain it?
CERTAINTY	Should you wait before taking action? What is potential harm in delaying measures or mitigation? (i.e. risk associated with waiting to obtain additional evidence.) List the pros and cons of acting versus waiting.
COMMUNICATION	What do you communicate to the public and when do you communicate it? How might you communicate risk to the public?

SUPPORTERS

The Network for Public Health Law (Network) is a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson. This document was developed by [Denise Chrysler](#), JD, Director, with the Network for Public Health Law – Mid-States Region at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. The Network provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The legal information and assistance provided in this document does not constitute legal advice or legal representation. For legal advice, please consult specific legal counsel.