
The Risk Retention Reporter

Edmund Malaspina, Jr. Steps in as HAI Group President and CEO

Edmund Malaspina, Jr. has been appointed as the new president and CEO of **HAI Group**, which includes the **Housing Authority RRG**, one of the oldest and largest risk retention groups. Malaspina replaces outgoing president John C. Thomson. As president, Malaspina looks to reassert HAI Group's core principles of strong risk management and effective community engagement.

Prior to John C. Thomson, who was acting president for less than two years, HAI Group had a history of promoting from within. Thomson replaced long-time president Dan Labrie, who was promoted from within replacing founding CEO John Salisbury. From its start as Housing Authority RRG, HAI Group has always had a very customer centric culture. According to Malaspina, this culture means that HAI Group may not be a good fit for a CEO coming in from outside the company.

"It's a unique culture. I'm fortunate to lead a team that shares a high level of commitment and dedication to improving customer experience," said Malaspina. "I know when I travel, and I've been here for more than 25 years, there are very few businesses that treat their customers the way we do. It's what sets us apart from the traditional insurer—the community engagement and grassroots participation from our board and committees. All that gives us the advantage of having a deeper understanding of the issues we face in our industry."

In his over 25 years at the company from an entry level employee in risk control, to working in marketing, to his tenure as COO of HAI Group subsidiary **Housing Telecommunications, Inc.**, Malaspina has grown professionally within the company. "When I made the choice to join HAI Group I believed in what the company stood for and saw the opportunity to make a difference," said Malaspina.

In addition to his experience at HAI Group and his insurance designations such as licensed producer and claims adjuster, Malaspina is a real estate broker and holds numerous housing industry certifications.

Given his time at the company, Malaspina is attuned to the historical values of HAI Group and wants to refocus on some of the community initiatives that had been put on hold by his predecessor. One such initiative is HAI Group's Harry House scholarship at **Howard University**, a historically black university in Washington, D.C. HAI Group also offers internships in the insurance industry culminating in a trip to the annual VCIA conference.

"Going forward we will maintain the tradition we had in the past of working with the youth. It's good to be able to give them opportunities to see our industry, and it has been beneficial for us as well," said Malaspina.

HAI Group also conducts research on the affordable housing industry through the **Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC)**, an independent, non-profit research center, another tool that HAI Group utilizes to meet the needs of its members. For example, a PAHRC report based on data collected in 2012—the last time national waiting list data for housing agencies and Housing Choice Vendors (HCVs) was collected—found that nearly all housing agencies had waiting lists. With 80% of agencies reporting, only 4% reported zero families waiting for a public housing unit, demonstrating the need for additional affordable housing.

Outside of community engagement, Malaspina's other top priority as president and CEO is a renewed focus on risk management and, with that, a return to profitability after significant losses to income in 2016.

"Risk management is very important to me. An area that I believe the insurance entity should focus on is preventable losses, and we have a preventable losses program that we rolled out this year to our membership. While our companies are well-capitalized one of my top priorities is to return to a positive net income position," said Malaspina.

One of the major exposures for the housing agencies that make up the membership of HAI Group is slips, trips, and falls and many of those accidents can be prevented. According to Malaspina, an effective risk management program entails regular inspections with effective documentation. When a hazard is identified, a timeline for a fix is put together. Then there is a follow-up to insure that the work was done properly. The new risk management program at HAI Group will take those standards and then adapt them to make a customized program for each member.

"We believe the measures we're taking in terms of preventable losses will have a significant impact on our bottom line," said Malaspina. "We're really excited here. It's an opportunity for us to get back and accept the challenge and move forward. I believe we'll do really well in the future."

*Reprinted from the August 2017 Risk Retention Reporter –
Volume 31, Number 8*