

Hierarchical level	Description
Strategic	Strategic planning addresses structural decision making. It involves defining the organization's mission (i.e. "strategy" or "direction"), and the decision making to translate this mission into the design, dimensioning, and development of the health care delivery process. Inherently, strategic planning has a long planning horizon and is based on highly aggregated information and forecasts. Examples of strategic planning are resource capacity expansions (e.g. acquisition of MRI machines), developing and/or implementing new medical protocols, forming a purchasing consortium, a merger of nursing homes, and contracting with health insurers.
Tactical	Tactical planning addresses the organization of the operations / execution of the health care delivery process (i.e. the "what, where, how, when and who"). In this way, it is similar to operational planning, however, decisions are made on a longer planning horizon. The length of this intermediate planning horizon lies somewhere between the strategic planning horizon and operational planning horizon. Following the concept of hierarchical planning, intermediate, tactical planning has more flexibility than operational planning, is less detailed, and has less demand certainty. Conversely, the opposite is true when compared to strategic planning.
Operational - Offline	Operational planning (both "offline" and "online") involves the short-term decision making related to the execution of the health care delivery process. There is low flexibility on this planning level, since many decisions on higher levels have demarcated the scope for the operational level decision making. The adjective "offline" reflects that this planning level concerns the in advance planning of operations. It comprises the detailed coordination of the activities regarding current (elective) demand. Examples of offline operational planning are: treatment selection, appointment scheduling, nurse rostering, inventory replenishment ordering, and billing.
Operational - Online	The stochastic nature of health care processes demands for reactive decision making. "Online" operational planning involves control mechanisms that deal with monitoring the process and reacting to unforeseen or unanticipated events. Examples of online planning functions are: triaging, add-on scheduling of emergencies, replenishing depleted inventories, rush ordering surgery instrument sterilization, handling billing complications.