

FALL MANAGEMENT DIRECT SUPPORT STAFF

DOH-DDSD

JANUARY 2017

The First Line of Defense

Direct Support Staff play a key role in reducing the risk of a person with ID/IDD falling. You are our first line of defense.

Approximately 50 to 60% of injuries reported in people with ID are due to falls (Hsieh et al., 2001; Sherrard et al., 2004). The New Mexico DDW had 1,237 falls reported in FY 2015. Some people are more likely to fall because of seizures, balance problems, or the way they walk. Others may not see well and cannot see steps, a change in the path, or magazines and clothes on the floor. Individuals with brittle or thin bones (osteoporosis) may have a bone break causing a fall.

We need your help to safeguard against the risk of injury due to falls. We need you to look for safety hazards that may cause a fall and to report changes in an individual or falls when you see them.

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What DSP Should Do

Environment:

- Remove loose rugs, and clutter from the floor and halls or sidewalks
- Clean up spills right away
- Make sure you let people know when a floor is wet
- Use gait belts, shower chairs, hand rails and lower beds
- Pad sharp corners and edges
- Make sure steps and halls are well lit

Medical Equipment:

- Help individuals put their glasses on and keep them in place
- Check if braces and shoes fit. If they are too difficult to put on, are too loose, or there is redness of the skin, tell the nurse. The

PT/OT can give guidance on the fit, or assist you in how to dress or put on a brace easier.

- Help individuals use their prescribed equipment (canes, walkers). Make sure the device is available and allow the person to move at their own pace. Hurrying can cause a fall.

Follow Health Care Plans and MERPs.

- If you have questions or need more information, ask the nurse for help. Refer to and use these documents (Medical Emergency Response Plans-MERPs, etc.) so you are familiar with what the individual needs.

What DSP Should Do

(continued)

Report Falls

- Call the nurse and document what happened when a fall occurred.

Self-Care:

- DO NOT RUSH – take time to complete activities
- Don't dress person with baggy clothes or pants that are too long
- Help the individual with their glasses
- Tie or fasten shoes
- Encourage the individual to follow their exercise program.
- Report medications that are not taken (seizures can result in a fall)
- Report changes in how the person appears or a change in their activity to the nurse

Watch for signs that a person has had an unwitnessed fall:

- Redness, "rug burn"
- Bruises or swelling
- Cuts or bleeding
- Expression or complaint of pain
- Not using or favoring a body part (due to an injury)
- Change in how the person usually acts - Are they sleepy, or afraid of going down the steps?

Learn More at:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professional/systems/long-term-care/resources/injuries/fallspix/fallspxrisk.html>