



BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CLIENT HANDLING PROGRAM



This PSHSA Fast Fact highlight the elements of a successful transfers and lifts program for caregivers to minimize the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.

BACKGROUND

From 2003-2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MoHLTC) released a total of \$103 million in funds for the Ontario Patient Lift Initiative which resulted in the implementation of over 12,000 new mechanical lifts (the majority of them ceiling lifts) for hospitals and long-term care homes. Despite this effort, organizations still face many challenges and barriers to creating and sustaining a successful client handling program.

Back injuries and related muscle strains are the most common injuries among caregivers. Most of these injuries are related to moving clients, either through lifting, transferring or repositioning. According to statistics from WSIB, in 2008 musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) accounted for 43% of all lost time injuries within all Ontario workplaces. Nearly **25% of those injuries were due to client handling** (WSIB Data Source, 2010).

A successful program for preventing client handling injuries goes beyond training caregivers in client transfers, lifts and repositioning techniques. A successful program assists employers and caregivers to recognize, assess, control and evaluate the workplace hazards with respect to the handling of clients.



FIVE ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CLIENT HANDLING PROGRAM

1. SENIOR LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

The organization must have the ongoing commitment of senior leadership in order for the program to be sustained. Evidence of this ongoing commitment includes:

- Allocation of the appropriate fiscal resources – an annual budget for the development, implementation and maintenance of the program. This includes the maintenance of the lifting equipment and ongoing assessment of needs for further equipment.
- Program Champion – senior leadership must assign the responsibility of the program to a senior manager.
- Multidisciplinary Committee – this committee should represent front-line workers, supervisors and any resource personnel that could contribute to this program. In a larger facility, this may include a staff educator, physiotherapist or occupational therapist and a health and safety specialist.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following categories of information should be gathered and analyzed at the assessment and evaluative processes:

- Incident/accident analysis
- Client mobility assessment
- Equipment needs
- Environmental barriers
- Organizational challenges

3. MINIMAL LIFT POLICY AND SUPPORTING PROCEDURES

The Client Handling Program is designed to control potential and existing hazards associated with client handling. Its basic elements are:

- Minimal lift policy and procedures
- Client mobility assessments
- Communication processes
- Client handling techniques and equipment
- Pre-use inspection of equipment
- Preventative maintenance of equipment
- Purchasing of client mechanical lift equipment and devices
- Infection control and cleaning
- Reporting and investigation of hazards, incidents and accidents
- Evaluative and continuous quality improvement

Education and training should include:

- Program goals and objectives
- Legislation
- Overview of injury demographics, statistics and current trends/issues
- MSD awareness
- Client handling policy and procedures, and expectations of compliance
- Client mobility assessments
- Selection of accepted client handling techniques and equipment
- Competency in performance of transfer, lift, lateral transfer/slide and reposition techniques
- Communication methods including documentation (type and location), forms, use of the assessment cards and logos, etc.



4. IMPLEMENTATION AND/OR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

The steps in implementation of a program are:

- Summarize and rank department injury rates and costs
- Conduct and summarize unit/department needs
- Summarize the needs of the unit/department
- Prepare for education/training

5. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Measure and evaluate program indicators
- Determine whether the program goals and objectives have been met
- Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Make recommendations regarding quality improvements to the program
- Ensure sustainability and maintenance of an effective program

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM PSHSA

FAST FACTS (FREE TO DOWNLOAD AT WWW.PSHSA.CA)

- How Much Can You Lift?
- How Does My Back Work?
- Repetitive Strain Injury: Could You Please Repeat That Again and Again and Again?
- Participatory Ergonomics

POSTERS AND CARDS (FREE TO DOWNLOAD AT WWW.PSHSA.CA)

- PSHSA Client Mobility Logo Cards
- Client Mobility Review

EDUCATION SESSIONS

- **Client Handling Program Enhancement** – Half-day workshop
This workshop, focusing on enhancing an existing client handling program, is an interactive session that engages participants in discussion about their program challenges. This is an opportunity for organizations to get hands-on experience using the tools and resources from the Handle with Care Resource manual under the facilitator's direction. This training is designed for Healthcare organizations that already have client handling programs in place.

REFERENCES:

<https://www.pshsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MSDs.pdf>