

Workplace Safety

This safety manual for Home Caregivers is designed to help you stay safe and avoid injury and illness related to personal care services. It is designed to give you ownership in your own safety and health. Please take some time to go through this manual and use it as a reference. By following these suggestions, you can greatly reduce your risk of accidents and illness.



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Glossary of Terms:

PCG Public Partnerships, LLC (PPL) is a full-service financial management services firm dedicated solely to providing fiscal/employer agent, third party administrator, and related support services to public agencies. We help state, county, and local public agencies to implement a participant-directed service model – that allows participants to make individual choices about which services they receive, how they are delivered and by whom, within their budget.

Many of our programs use different verbiage for the same job description. Below, is a **glossary of terms** for terminology that is used frequently throughout our programs:

Employee- Attendant, Provider, Attendant Care Worker, Support Worker, Home Caregiver, Personal Assistants (PA)

Employer- Member, Consumer, Clients, Managing Employers, Participants

Support Broker- Case Manager, Service Coordinator, Care Coordinator



Safety Guidelines

- Practice safety at all times.
- Think safety for both you and your consumer.
- Take the time to do it right.
- Keep quick access to a phone to call 911.
- Use gloves when handling chemicals, blood, or body fluids/substances.
- Follow consumer care instructions carefully.
- Lift safely.
- Use ladders instead of chairs.
- Use gloves and good ventilation when working with household chemicals.
- Make sure smoke detectors are in place and are working.
- Use good lighting.
- Keep firearms and ammunition safe.
- Don't use broken equipment.
- Know your emergency escape route and outside meeting place.
- Ask for help if you have a hazard you can't resolve with your consumer. Call your coordinator.



Slip and Fall Rules

According to the OSHA website; slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15% of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities. Clients and Employees should be aware of the potential hazards in the workplace and take necessary steps to prevent them.

- Employees performing homemaker duties should keep rooms, work areas, hallways and especially steps, free of equipment and other objects that block traffic or present tripping hazards.
- Please be responsible and keep sidewalks and driveways free of snow and ice.
- Both Clients and Employees should clean up any spills immediately to prevent any slip and fall injuries.
- Employees should help the Client to store supplies and other equipment in proper storage places.
- Electrical cords and/or telephone cables should be placed so that they do not lie in heavily traveled areas. If they must lie in heavily traveled areas, they should be anchored with electrical tape.
- Employees should use a step ladder for objects out of their reach. Please insure that the step ladder has safety feet and is in good condition.
- Employees should wear proper footwear at all times. No bare feet . Non-skid soled shoes are preferred.
- Employees need to let Clients and Support Coordinators know when a tripping hazard is identified. These hazards include but not limited to: bulges in carpet, loose flooring, or raised edges. All parties should work together to repair the issue immediately.



Ladder and Climbing Safety

Employees do experience falls from ladders and other surfaces. Please avoid climbing when possible. If employees must climb a ladder, they should follow the guidelines below:

- Inspect the ladder first, and if it is defective or unstable, **don't use it.**
- **Never** use a metal ladder for electrical work, including changing a light bulb.
- Set the ladder on a solid, level surface and never place it on a place or unstable surface to increase the height.
- Never stand on the top step.
- Keep the ladder away from the doorways and walkways where it might be bumped while you are using it.
- Make sure stepladder locking arms are locked. If using a straight ladder to access a high surface, extend the ladder at least three feet beyond the surface and tie it off if possible.
- Always face the ladder as you climb up and down and use both hands. If you need to carry something up the ladder, use your pockets or place it on the ladder platform.
- Return the ladder to its proper storage place so it is readily available.





Stair Rules

All stairways should be equipped with either railings or handrails. In the case of enclosed stairways, a handrail needs to be installed; preferably on the right side of the stairs as you descend.

- Employees should always use the hand rails when going up or down stairs.
- Employees should **NEVER** use their feet to kick or push items down the stairs.
- Employees should ask another person for help with any heavy and/or awkward items.
- Employees should take multiple trips up and down the stairs if needed to safely move all items.



Lifting/ Transferring Rules



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses. Further, one-fourth of all compensation indemnity claims involve back injuries, costing industry billions of dollars on top of the pain and suffering borne by employees. Moreover, through lifting, placing, carrying, holding and lowering are involved in manual materials handling (the principal cause of compensable work injuries) the BLS survey shows that four out of five of these injuries were to the lower back, and that three out of the four occurred while the employee was lifting .

Tips for good body mechanics:

- **Neutral posture.** Neutral spine posture is a key element of body mechanics. Why? The spine has three (3) curves to make it strong. It is important to KEEP THESE CURVES when moving, bending, and lifting. Loss of curves means the back is less stable and more prone to injury.
- **Wide base of support.** Stand with your feet 8-12" (shoulder width) apart with one foot a half step ahead of the other. You will then be able to move the consumer or object by using a weight shift rather than a dead lift.
- **Bend knees.** Bending your knees rather than your back makes your legs do the work instead of your back.
- **Keep your back straight.** Keeping your back straight or maintaining its natural curve minimizes the risk of injury. Muscles that support your back work optimally in this position.
- **Bring weight close to your body.** A heavy object that is held close to your body is easier to carry. There is less load on your back and less stress on your back muscles.
- **Lift with your legs.** The muscles of your legs are stronger than your back and should be used for lifting.
- **Adjust the height of the bed when possible.** If the consumer is in a hospital bed, raise the bed to the best height so that stress on your back is minimized when assisting with transfers, dressing, toileting, positioning, or range of motion exercises.
- **To turn, move your feet.** If you turn without moving your feet, you are twisting your back. This causes wear and tear on your discs, which can raise the risk of injury.
- **Use one leg as a counter balance** when picking up something off of the floor.
- **Keep your "nose between your toes"**. Face your work; don't twist, move your feet instead.

Wheelchair Safety Rules

There have been several injuries involving electric wheelchairs. It is important that both Clients and Employees be aware of their surroundings when using such equipment.

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR COMMON WHEELCHAIR TRANSFERS

- Encourage consumer to “scoot” toward edge of chair/seat as much as possible.
- Position self into proper body mechanics stance (knees bent, arch in lower back) while holding onto waistband or gait belt.
- Be sure consumer understands where he/she is going to move to.
- Ensure that the brakes are in the locked position on the wheelchair.
- Prepare the consumer to transfer by having him/her move on the “count of 3”.
- Have consumer push up with arms from sitting surface as able.
- Avoid allowing the consumer to attempt to put arms around neck or shoulder of the transfer assistant as this may cause neck or back injury.
- Maintain proper body mechanics while pivoting.

TRANSFER FROM BED TO WHEELCHAIR

- Inform consumer of what you are planning to do.
- Have the wheelchair close to the bed but not in the way.
- Turn the consumer onto their side and help them to sit on the edge of the bed.
- Place a gait belt on the consumer after they have scooted to the edge of the bed.
- Grasping the gait belt in the middle of the consumers back will help minimize pulling on the consumer. If no gait belt is present, you can put your arms around the consumer’s chest and clasp your hands together behind their back.
- Bend your knees and on the “count of 3”, lift.
- Have the consumer pivot toward the chair as you continue to keep your hands grasped behind the consumers back.
- Bend your knees and lower the consumer into the wheelchair.



Blood Borne Germs & Needle Sticks

Needle stick injuries and other sharps-related injuries which expose workers to blood borne germs continue to be an important public health concern. Workers in many different occupations are at risk of exposure to blood borne germs, including Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS. First aid team members, housekeeping personnel (in some settings), nurses, and other healthcare providers are examples of workers who may be at risk of exposure.

- Employees should ALWAYS wear gloves to protect themselves when handling a persons body fluids or blood.
- Employees should promptly dispose of used needles in appropriate sharps disposal containers [some states prohibit syringes/needles and lancets (sharps) from being disposed and collected with regular garbage. You may be subject to fines if you are caught disposing of sharps improperly. Please check to see if this law is in effect in your state]. Clients should provide a sharps container for proper disposal of needles.
- Employees should NEVER recap a needle.
- Employees should get a Hepatitis B (HBV) vaccination. Hepatitis B is a virus that causes liver disease. It can severely damage the liver leading to cirrhosis, liver cancer and in some cases death. Symptoms can be treated, but in most cases, cannot be completely cured. The vaccination is a series of 3 shots over a period of time given prior to/or immediately after exposure to help prevent HBV infection.
- Clients should provide a blood spill cleanup kit.
- Any hazards should be reported to the Client.

Protecting yourself from infectious diseases on the job requires knowing the facts, practicing good hygiene, and taking a few sensible precautions. **These are measures that you can control.** They are vitally important, so take them seriously. If you care about your job, your consumer, and yourself, its worth it. Hand washing is one of the best defenses against spreading infection, including HBV and HIV. Always wash your hands with non-abrasive soap and water after removing your gloves AND before putting on new gloves.



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