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PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

**Ensuring Safety and Security
Assisting with Personal Care
Escorting to Appointments
Following Plans from Specialists**



PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The individuals you support will more fully enjoy life if they are in good health. Part of your role as a Direct Support Provider (DSP) is to ensure that they have the same opportunities for health and wellness that we all expect.

In this section you will learn about:

- ◆ Ensuring Safety and Security
- ◆ Assisting with Personal Care
- ◆ Escorting to Appointments
- ◆ Following Plans from Specialists

ENSURING SAFETY AND SECURITY

An important part of a DSPs job is ensuring the safety and security of the individuals they support. Additionally, they must be aware of situations that might put their own safety at risk.

*For more information refer to **Safe Work Procedures** located in the Department of Families Direct Support Provider Orientation Manual.*

A DSP can offer safety and security to individuals being supported by:

- ◆ Providing adequate attention and guidance both in and out of the home
- ◆ Providing safe surroundings
- ◆ Implementing effective infection control measures
- ◆ Using proper body mechanics

Prevention of Injuries

Preventing injuries requires developing habits of safety awareness. When you are working with children and adults in their homes, it is important to be aware of potential dangers. If there are concerns about the physical environment, contact your supervisor.

Basic Rules for Safety in the Home *(adapted from Mosby, 2003)*

- ◆ Provide adequate lighting, especially at steps, stairs, hallways, entrances, and uneven walking surfaces
- ◆ Maintain a clutter-free home (stairways, heavy traffic areas)

- ◆ Remove frayed rugs and scatter rugs
- ◆ Clean up spills immediately, especially liquids and grease
- ◆ Keep small electrical appliances away from water in the kitchen and bathroom
- ◆ Encourage use of grab bars next to the toilet, bathtub, and shower
- ◆ Encourage use of non-skid mats in the tub, shower, and on the bathroom floor
- ◆ Turn pan handles inward when cooking
- ◆ Ensure stove and microwave are not left unattended

Infection Control

Practicing good personal hygiene is important in fighting the spread of illness and disease. Handwashing is a key component in the practice of infection control. Experts on infection control say that handwashing is one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of infection.



Rules for Hand washing: Wash your hands

- ◆ When you arrive to work
- ◆ Before and after personal contact with the individual being supported or their personal care items
- ◆ During personal care, if interrupted for any reason
- ◆ Between tasks
- ◆ After using toilet

- ▶ When you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose
- ▶ Before and after meals
- ▶ Before and after handling food
- ▶ When hands become contaminated with body fluids
- ▶ Before leaving work

A DSP also needs to be aware of other types of precautions that should be used to prevent illness and infection such as Standard (Universal) Precautions.

Standard (Universal) Precautions

- ▶ *A method of infection control by which all human blood and body fluids are treated as though they are infected with disease causing germs.*
- ▶ *Hand washing is a vital part of this practice, along with the proper use of gloves.*
- ▶ **Disposable Gloves** are always worn when there is a risk of direct contact with body fluids or moist body surfaces.



Examples of when to use disposable gloves

- ▶ When assisting someone in the washroom, changing a diaper or a personal undergarment (e.g., Attends, Depends, sanitary napkin).
- ▶ Assisting someone to brush their teeth or use dental floss if you may be in contact with the mouth or toothbrush (e.g., physically assisting them, hand over hand or actually brushing their teeth).

Standard (Universal) Precautions are used to protect:

- ➔ *You from infectious disease*
- ➔ *The person being assisted from infections you may have; sometimes assistants bring infections to the people they support.*

Hand washing is always done BEFORE and AFTER using gloves.

For more information refer to **Universal Precautions and Infection Control Guidelines** for Direct Support Providers in the Department of Families Direct Support Provider Orientation Manual.

Using Good Body Mechanics

As a DSP, you may be expected to assist individuals with many aspects of care. These will be made safer for both the DSP and the person receiving care with the use of good body mechanics. Body mechanics refer to the proper use of muscles to move and lift objects and to maintain good posture. They are important to use for tasks such as:

- ◆ Helping people move from one place to another
- ◆ Assisting someone with their wheelchair or other equipment
- ◆ Helping someone get dressed
- ◆ Doing various household tasks and leisure activities



Tips For Good Body Mechanics (adapted from Mosby, 2003)

- ◆ Wear appropriate footwear while inside the home
- ◆ Properly use assistive devices as instructed by the person, parents or other caregivers (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, canes)
- ◆ Ask for help when required
- ◆ Avoid bending over from the waist or twisting your upper body
- ◆ Get close to an object or individual when moving
- ◆ Push, slide, or roll objects or equipment rather than lifting
- ◆ Keep feet apart for a wider base of support
- ◆ Keep back straight
- ◆ Adjust work height when possible; avoid reaching, twisting, and bending
- ◆ Never lift a load that is overhead; use a stool to get as close as possible to the object

Practicing good body mechanics offers the following benefits:

- ➔ Reduced muscle fatigue, strain, and body injury
- ➔ Tasks are performed efficiently
- ➔ Reduced anxiety and fear about being assisted
- ➔ Increased confidence in the worker's ability to perform tasks correctly

ASSISTING WITH PERSONAL CARE

There are many reasons why the individuals you support may require assistance with personal care, grooming, and hygiene. The individual may be:

- ◆ Suffering from an illness
- ◆ Lacking energy and strength
- ◆ Experiencing pain or discomfort
- ◆ Unable to reach body parts
- ◆ Having difficulty obtaining, carrying, or using personal care supplies
- ◆ Anxious and fearful of injury
- ◆ Confused, unable to do the task, or still learning the task
- ◆ Forgetting what to do and how to do it

It is very important that the DSP listen carefully to the individual, other care-givers, or parents for specific information and instructions. It is the DSPs responsibility to find out:

- ◆ **Which** personal care routines require assistance
- ◆ **When** and **where** the individual prefers these routines
- ◆ Preferences about **how** they like the support to be given

This will ensure that personal care tasks and routines are followed in the best way possible.



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Common Areas of Assistance

The kind of assistance required will depend on factors such as physical ability and level of understanding. In all situations, encourage the individual to do as much as possible for themselves.

Assisting with Meals



Before serving a meal you should do the following:

- ◆ Explain what you are going to do.
- ◆ Arrange the food attractively on the plate. Try not to serve foods that are all one color, such as white fish, potatoes, and cauliflower.
- ◆ Try to make the table and surroundings look attractive. Set the table with the proper utensils.
- ◆ If the person uses adaptive eating utensils, such as a plate guard or built-up silverware, place these properly and within easy reach.
- ◆ Cut the food and assist the person as required.

In addition to all of the above. . .

If the individual is unable to eat independently, they may require full

- ◆ Sit near the individual and explain what is being served.
- ◆ Prepare foods as recommended by the individual, parents, or other caregivers (e.g., moisten, mince, puree).
- ◆ Ask the individual what they would like to eat first.
- ◆ Feed individual one bite at a time to prevent choking and possible aspiration (breathing in or inhaling a substance into the bronchial tubes and lungs).
- ◆ Alternate solids and liquids.
- ◆ Talk pleasantly with individual and encourage them to eat.
- ◆ When the individual is finished, wash their hands and face as necessary.
- ◆ Change individual's clothing if it has become soiled.

Bathing

(adapted from Best Practice Procedure - Home Care Attendant, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 09/25/01)



- ◆ Be organized. The room should be warm and the necessary supplies on hand, including, soap, towel, washcloth, and clothing to put on after bath.
- ◆ Practice standard (universal) precautions when body fluids are present.
- ◆ If assessed as necessary, a bath stool or bath board should be used. A rubber mat or a non-skid pad should be placed on the bottom of the tub. The DSP must advise their supervisor if the recommended equipment is not available.
- ◆ Half fill tub with warm water. Ask individual if the temperature is comfortable.
- ◆ Assist individual to undress.
- ◆ Provide privacy. Do not expose the individual's body unnecessarily.
- ◆ Prevent injuries. Suggest individual use bathroom counter for balance as necessary.
- ◆ **DO NOT ALLOW INDIVIDUAL TO USE TOWEL BAR FOR SUPPORT.**
- ◆ Assist individual to bathtub in the manner recommended by supervisor.
- ◆ Once the individual is in the tub, prevent chilling. Keep the person covered as much as possible and avoid drafts.
- ◆ Bathe individual following principles of asepsis (starting from cleaner area to less clean area, e.g., wash face first, perineum i.e., bottom last). Accommodate individual's preferences. Encourage as much independence as possible.

- ◆ Rinse well ensuring that all soap has been removed, paying special attention to skin folds and between toes.
- ◆ Perineum (i.e., bottom), care may be done using procedure recommended by supervisor.
- ◆ Change bath water when it becomes too soapy, cool, or dirty.
- ◆ Once individual is washed and rinsed, drain water.
- ◆ Transfer individual out of the tub in the manner recommended by your supervisor.
- ◆ **DO NOT DO A COMPLETE LIFT FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE TUB.**
- ◆ If the individual becomes weak or is no longer able to rise from bottom of tub, empty tub, cover individual with towel and contact your supervisor.
- ◆ Once individual is out of tub, assist to dry the skin well, paying special attention to skin folds.
- ◆ Gently pat skin dry instead of rubbing.
- ◆ If directed by family or family doctor, apply non-prescription moisturizers, lotions, or talcum powders (**DO NOT** mix these products) once individual is out of the bathtub to prevent falls.
- ◆ After the individual is dry, clothed, and positioned safely, clean tub and bath equipment, hang bath mat and towels. Place clothes and soiled laundry in proper place as individual directs.
- ◆ Advise supervisor of any concerns regarding changes in support needed to complete this task.

Hair Washing

(adapted from Best Practice Procedure - Home Care Attendant, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 09/25/01)



- ◆ Hair washing may be completed in the shower or tub, over a sink, in a chair, or while the individual is in bed.
- ◆ Test the water first to ensure it is lukewarm and not too hot. Ask the individual if the water temperature is comfortable.
- ◆ Use plenty of warm water to wet the hair.
- ◆ Apply shampoo and lather, ensuring the scalp is also massaged. Take care to prevent shampoo from dripping into the eyes.
- ◆ Rinse shampoo out thoroughly with warm water.
- ◆ Ensure areas such as back of the neck and behind the ears are thoroughly rinsed.
- ◆ Dry hair well using towel to absorb moisture.
- ◆ Hair may then be dried using blow dryer. **DO NOT** use hot settings.
- ◆ Hair should be brushed or combed daily.
- ◆ **DO NOT SET, CUT, COLOUR, OR PERM HAIR.**

Skin Care



- ◆ Plain soap is drying to skin. The individual may use medicated or moisturizing products instead of soap if advised by supervisor.
- ◆ Non-prescription creams/lotions may be applied to soften skin and prevent drying. Warm the lotion between your hands before applying, apply gently, do not massage or rub in vigorously.

Pressure Sores

Individuals who spend long periods of time in bed or in a wheelchair may experience the effects of immobility. These can include "pressure" or "bed sores". The following measures should be observed to prevent this type of skin problem:

- ◆ The individual's position **MUST** be changed at least **every 2 hours**.
- ◆ Each time the individual is moved, changed or bathed, observe the skin for any changes; immediately report redness, paleness, or white discoloration of the skin particularly over bony areas, to your supervisor.

Dressing and Undressing

It is important to ask the individual which clothes are preferred. Choosing what to wear gives the individual a sense of being in control. Clothes should be suitable for the weather, the type of activity, and the age of the individual. They should be clean and well-cared for.

- ◆ Explain what you are going to do
- ◆ Lay out clothing in proper order (e.g., underwear then outer wear, socks then shoes)
- ◆ Follow the individual's dressing practices when helping to put on clothing
- ◆ Do not rush; for some individuals, getting dressed is hard work
- ◆ Ensure socks and shoes are on before moving individual, to prevent falls

Mouth Care and Brushing Teeth

Mouth or oral care means cleaning the mouth, teeth, gums, and tongue to remove pieces of food and bacteria. This helps prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and mouth odour as well as providing the mouth with a clean and fresh feeling.



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- ◆ Practice standard (universal) precautions.
- ◆ Get all supplies ready and have the individual brush their teeth **or** brush the individual's teeth. Do these at the bathroom sink, if possible.
- ◆ Have the individual "balloon" their cheeks in and out to distribute water or mouthwash throughout the mouth and between the teeth. Or, have them turn their head from side to side (like saying "no") to distribute water or mouthwash throughout the mouth and between the teeth.

Flossing between the surfaces of the teeth helps to remove food particles and other materials. Floss teeth only as instructed by the individual, their parents, or a dentist.

Assistance using the washroom

Some children and adults have difficulty controlling their bladder or bowels; this is called incontinence. Children use diapers until they are able to have full control of their elimination. Older children and adults have a variety of products available to them that are often referred to as incontinence products (e.g., Attends, Depends).

Typically, if the individuals you support use these products, they will need your assistance in replacing them. At this time, it may also be necessary to assist them with perineal or pericare. Pericare refers to cleaning the perineum; the area between the legs. Some people you work with will refer to this as their "privates" or "crotch".

- ◆ Provide privacy by closing the door.
- ◆ Give time alone if it is safe to do so.
- ◆ Use tissue to remove urine and feces. For girls and women, always clean from the front of the body to the back to avoid contamination of the urinary or vaginal opening with feces or bacteria from the anus.
- ◆ Report anything unusual to your supervisor.
- ◆ Allow time for the individual to wash their hands.



In all situations, when providing personal assistance and care, the DSP should encourage as much independence as possible!

ESCORTING TO ACTIVITIES AND APPOINTMENTS

One of your jobs as a DSP may be to escort the individual you support to various appointments. These may be related to grooming, (e.g., haircut, manicure) or to visiting friends, or to attending events outside their home. At other times you could be requested to go to a medical appointment with someone.

It is important to know and understand your role regarding activities and appointments.

- ◆ Is your role to provide transportation?
- ◆ Is your role to help the person problem solve?
- ◆ Is your role to assist with communication?
- ◆ Is it all of the above?

Your tasks during activities and appointments will vary from situation to situation depending on your role. You will provide as little or as much support as the individual requires.



For Example

If your role is to provide **transportation** to a medical appointment, you'll probably wait for the person in the waiting room. However, if your role is to assist with **communication**, you may actually go into the examination room with the person.

**Remember**

- Gather information prior to leaving for the appointment or activity (e.g., location of appointment, where to park, medical information, how much money is to be spent).
- Record important information that the parents or other caregivers will need to know (e.g., prescription information, follow-up appointments required).

FOLLOWING PLANS FROM SPECIALISTS

Having a disabling condition does not necessarily mean that one has poor health. In relatively rare instances, there may be medical, psychiatric, or emotional conditions associated with someone's disability. In these instances a DSP may be asked to carry out a specific care plan when authorized by their supervisor. Some of these may have to do with therapy or interventions to assist the person to achieve their full potential. Other activities or tasks may be directly related to a medical issue.

The following are examples of specialists whose instructions you

Physician

- ▶ A person licensed to practice medicine; a medical doctor
- ▶ Prescribes medication

Psychiatrist

- ▶ A medical doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders
- ▶ Prescribes medications

Psychologist

- ▶ A non-medical specialist in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional problems
- ▶ Cannot prescribe medications or treat physical health problems

Speech-Language Therapist

- ▶ Helps individuals learn to communicate, including listening to, understanding, and expressing ideas

Occupational Therapist

- ▶ Helps individuals overcome physical or social problems due to illness or disability
- ▶ Skilled in adapting the environment so that the person can complete particular tasks safely and independently

Physical Therapist

- ▶ Uses activities and exercises to help the individual overcome problems with movement and posture; usually involving large muscles of the body

Behaviour Specialist

- ▶ Provides an assessment of an individual's behaviour and develops a detailed plan to address the behaviour
- ▶ Assists the family or care provider to implement the behaviour plan

So . . .

As a DSP you will have the opportunity to support individuals to be healthy. This may include ensuring their safety and security, assisting with their personal care, escorting them to appointments, and following up on plans from specialists. Like all of us, individuals with disabling conditions need to maintain healthy practices to support their ability to lead a full life.

Resources

Batshaw, M. (Ed.). (2001). **When Your Child Has a Disability-Revised Edition**. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brooks Publishing

Birchenall, J. & Streight, E. (2003). **Mosby's Textbook for the Home Care Aide-2nd Edition**. St. Louis, Missouri: Mosby.

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