## **Health Trends**



September 2019

### **Office of Integrated Health**



What is a fall? A fall is any situation in which someone descends (or falls) suddenly and involuntarily toward a lower surface or the ground (DBHDS, 2016).

Why do individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities fall? The reasons may be related to physical factors, environmental factors, impaired cognitive processing, and/or neurologic factors, and/or a combination of the above (Hsieh, Rimmer & Heller, 2012).

**Can behavioral challenges be a component to why a person falls?** Yes. An individual might exhibit a behavior that causes a fall, but an individual might also, "pretend to fall". A pretend fall is not one in which "someone descends (or falls) suddenly and involuntarily toward a lower surface or the ground." If a pretend fall is suspected, a consultation with a behavioral specialist is recommended (DBHDS, 2016).

### A National Resource!

The CDC created **STEADI** (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths, & Injuries), an initiative, for caregivers who care for individuals who are at risk of falling, or who may have fallen in the past. <u>https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/about.html (CDC, 2019a).</u>

Which factors put individuals with intellectual disabilities at greatest risk for falls (Hsieh, Rimmer & Heller, 2012)?

- A history of seizures.
- A history of a previous fall.
- Gender (females are at highest risk).
- Skeletal problems (osteoporosis, etc.)
- A history of arthritis.
- Taking 4 or more medications.
- The use of walking aids and other Durable Medical Equipment (DME).
- The effects of aging (loss of musculature, etc.)
- A history of visual and/or hearing loss.
- Other health issues such as neurological disorders, diabetes, low blood sugar, low blood pressure.
- A history of poor balance or vertigo.
- Weakness or fatigue due to an illness.
- A cluttered living environment or area rugs.
- Poor lighting.
- Wet/slick flooring surfaces.
- Substance abuse (alcohol, etc.).

### What can we do?

- If you observe any of these risk factors, the first step towards safety is to consult the individual's primary care provider (PCP).
- 2) Include a discussion about these risk factors with the individual and their support team at the annual ISP meeting (DBHDS, 2016).

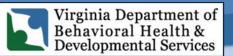
#### **Resources & References:**

Centers for Disease Control (2019a). About CDC's STEADI. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/about.html

Centers for Disease Control (2019b). What you can do to prevent falls. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/adultfalls.html">https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/adultfalls.html</a> Hsieh, K., Rimmer, J., & Heller, T. (2012). Prevalence of falls and risk factors in adults with intellectual disability. American journal on intellectual and developmental disabilities, 117, 442-454.

National Council on Aging (2019). National falls prevention resource center. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-resource-center/">https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-resource-center/</a> Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), Commonwealth of Virginia Government (2016). Orientation manual for direct support professionals (DSPs) and supervisors: Supporting people in their homes and communities [Brochure]. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), Commonwealth of Virginia Government.

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### **Office of Integrated Health**

The 2nd Annual Statewide Nursing Meeting Sponsored by Region 3 REACH Supported by DBHDS
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2019
Location: New River Valley Community Services 401 West Main Street, Radford, Va. 24141
Time: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm - Doors open at 8:30 for registration
Cost: "Early Bird" Registration - \$25.00 Registration after August 31, 2019 - \$30.00
Registration link: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-2nd-annual-statewidenursing-meeting-tickets-66705968347
Event registration: Closes on October 8, 2019. No refunds available. Registration can be transferred to another person.
Seating: Limited to the first 100 registered persons.
Special rate hotel accommodations: \$70/night on Monday, October 21, 2019 and/or Tuesday, October 22, 2019, The Best
Western - 1501 Tyler Ave, Radford, VA. 24141 540-639-3000, Request "Statewide Nurses Meeting" for special rate.
Registration fee includes: Breakfast and coffee (bagel trays and fresh fruit), vendor tables, and lunch catered by Moe's
Southwest Grill (gluten friendly and vegetarian options available). See <a href="https://www.moes.com/nutrition">https://www.moes.com/nutrition</a> for more allergy/diet
information.

Any questions or concerns regarding this event: Please contact Marylou Bryan at <u>marylou.bryan@dbhds.virginia.gov</u>, Melissa Blevins at <u>melissa.blevins@dbhds.virginia.gov</u> and/or Carrie Browder at <u>cbrowder@nrvcs.org</u>.







## Falls from patient lifts can cause injuries including head trauma, fractures and death. Follow these safety tips to lower the risk of falls from patient lifts.

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use. Most accidents can be avoided if proper procedures are followed.
- Get training from a qualified Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT) before operating a lift.
- Be aware that most lifts require two or more caregivers to safely operate.
- Only use a sling specifically designed for the lift you are using.
- The use of a lift should be avoided if the individual is agitated, resistant or combative.
- Using the wrong sling or attaching the sling incorrectly may cause an accident that can result in serious injury or death.
- Do not use a lift to transport an individual, unless the lift is specifically designed for transport.
- Test lift controls before bringing the lift to the individual. Make sure the emergency release feature works.
- Check lift and sling weight limits. Ensure that the individual's weight does not exceed the limits.
- Examine sling and attachment areas for tears, holes and frayed seams. DO NOT USE a sling with any signs of wear.
- Do not ever leave the individual unattended while in the lift sling.
- Never keep the individual suspended in a lift sling for more than a few minutes (KwikPoint and the United States Food and Drug Administration, n.d.).

#### **References:**

Freepik (2019). Tips graphics. [image]. Retrieved from <u>https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/tips</u> KwikPoint and the United States Food and Drug Administration (n.d.). Patient lifts: Safety guide. Retrieved from <u>https://www.fda.gov/files/medical%20devices/published/Patient-Lifts-Safety-Guide.pdf</u>

Muscular Dystrophy Association (2019). Portable lifts: A real pick-me-up for caregivers. [image]. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.mda.org/quest/article/portable-lifts-real-pick-me-caregivers">https://www.mda.org/quest/article/portable-lifts-real-pick-me-caregivers</a>