

HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY FACT SHEET

THE STEPS TO SAFETY

Mechanical lifts can totally remove the risk to both the caregiver and the client. Make accountability for safe behavior and work methods a supervisory responsibility.



Healthcare Operations
Covered by These Guidelines

Nurse's Aides

Healthcare Aides

Registered Nurses

Janitorial Staff

Physician's Assistants

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This publication reveals some facts about your industry that will help you understand and reduce the costs of workplace injuries. We hope this information will help you assess your workplace and make it as safe and productive as it can be. But if you need help, call us.

The healthcare industry includes hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home healthcare, doctors' and dentists' offices, and clinics. As we look to the future, we know that managed care is changing the working environment. Care will shift from the more controlled settings of skilled nursing facilities to the home. Nurses' aides/orderlies, as a group, account for the most frequently injured worker in New York State. This alone is an industry challenge to improve work site safety. Below are some steps that must be taken to help minimize the risks that these healthcare workers face.

1. SUPERVISOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Management must be required to safeguard employees' health by assuring that safe work practices are in place and are followed. Assignment of safety responsibility and accountability must come from management and on down to the supervisors. Supervisors are the eyes and ears of hazard recognition and control. They must monitor their areas on a daily basis for factors that can cause injuries.

- Make accountability for safe behavior and work methods a supervisory responsibility. Safety outcomes should be part of every supervisor's performance review. Supervisors must act as role models for safety, setting proper examples.
- Every supervisor in the healthcare arena must be assigned the responsibility of reviewing and auditing practices which put direct care providers at risk. This is particularly true for nursing personnel and others who must move patients and materials.

2. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

Historically, nurses have assessed clients/patients for their ability to perform activities of daily living. A comprehensive assessment includes the caregiver and the environment as well as the client/patient. Ask questions such as:

- Does the nurse's physical size allow for tasks to be completed safely?
- Is the caregiver physically fit to perform the duties of the position?
- Is fatigue likely to be a problem?

The work environment should also be part of this assessment. Is there enough space to safely complete tasks? Are there uneven floor or work surfaces? Are lift-assist devices available and used routinely?



3. ERGONOMICS

It is well-documented that the back is the body part most often injured in today's workplace. Healthcare is no exception. Lifting and moving clients/patients is a high risk activity. Specific procedures and training are necessary to standardize safe work practice. The following are necessary controls for healthcare:

- **Patient-Handling Procedures:**
 1. Mechanical lifts remove the need to lift a non-weight-bearing client/patient, thus removing the risk to both the caregiver and the client.
 2. Documentation of particular transfer techniques and/or assist devices should be part of each care plan.
- **Office Ergonomics:** In addition to the risk to the caregiver's back, most healthcare organizations have a considerable number of clerical support staff. The risk to workers performing admissions, accounting, medical records and secretarial tasks is due to long periods of sitting with repetitive use of the upper extremities. To help control these risks, it is important to develop a safe approach to office ergonomics. You should:
 1. Assure employee participation in workstation design.
 2. Develop your own train-the-trainer and ergonomic assessment capability.

4. MATERIAL HANDLING

Some of the occupations with the highest number of injured workers in New York State are found in the health care industry. Some of these titles do not include caregiving duties and, they do not require special skills or training at the entry level.

Hiring practices should include pre-employment physicals with physical requirements stated in a written job description created prior to hiring. Employment should be contingent on whether the applicant can perform the tasks outlined in the job description.

Train employees in proper material handling methods. This training is to include proper lifting and body mechanics and the use of lifting equipment and aids.

The NYSIF Fact File

Healthcare Operations

Most Frequent Injuries

1. Lifting
2. Falls
3. Struck by/Struck against
4. Material Handling
5. Repetitive Motion

Body Part Injured

1. Backs
2. Knees
3. Shoulders
4. Fingers
5. Hands

Type of Injury

1. Back sprains
2. Cuts & Lacerations
3. Fractures
4. Musculoskeletal disorders

