

Postural Supports

Learner Workbook



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INTRODUCTION

The information in this learner workbook is adapted from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

All persons in assisted living and residential care must be afforded protections for their health and safety. Postural supports are used for medical reasons and are meant to provide for the health and safety of each person who has need for such supports. The use of any type of postural support has risks associated with its use. In order to use any type of postural support there must be a specific medical symptom or reason that would require such use. The application or use of a postural support is prohibited except to treat a person's medical symptom(s) and may not be imposed for purposes of coercion, discipline, or staff convenience.

DEFINITIONS

Mechanical Support: A mechanical support is any appliance or device that is used as a postural support, protective restraint, or safety device.

Medical Practitioner: A medical practitioner is an individual who is legally licensed to practice medicine. This includes physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners.

Medical Reason: A medical reason refers to the need to reduce the risk of physical or psychological harm to the person. 4. **Medical Symptom:** A medical symptom refers to any subjective evidence of a physical or psychological condition or of a physical or psychological need expressed by the person including the expressed fear of falling. 5.

Normal Movement: Normal movement means voluntary or involuntary movements specific to the individual's medical condition (i.e., seizures, spasticity, athetosis [involuntary slow movements], and abnormal reflexes).

Postural Support: Postural support means an appliance or device used to achieve proper body position, balance, or alignment and is part of an established treatment plan as recommended by a physical therapist, occupational therapist or medical provider to address a person's physical impairment and if possible, improve mobility, postural alignment, and independent functioning. Postural supports are not considered restraints when a medical reason for their use is identified.

Restraint: A restraint means any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material, or equipment attached or adjacent to the individual's body that the individual cannot remove easily which restricts freedom of movement or normal access to one's body.

USE OF POSTURAL SUPPORTS

Postural supports are used to achieve proper body position, balance, or alignment of any part of the body. The following procedure is recommended for the use of any postural support:

1. For any postural support, an order from a medical practitioner is required. The resident's insurance will not fund such devices without an order and, in most cases, without a face to face encounter with the medical practitioner to justify the need for the device.
2. Ideally an occupational therapist or physical therapist that is trained and experienced in the use of postural supports will be involved in evaluating the needs of the individual and recommending the appropriate device(s).
3. When ordering equipment such as wheelchairs, a technician from the company will most likely also be involved.
4. There should be a written description of the postural support(s) with a protocol for use available for review by all staff. Each device is different, and staff must be trained in the specifics of each device.
5. Use of the postural support should be addressed in the resident's service plan and/or treatment records. This should include:
 - a. Identification of the support(s) and instructions for proper use.
 - b. Reason for the support(s).
 - i. Include a brief description of the person's medical needs.
 - c. Schedule of use. Include schedule for position changes.
 - d. Monitoring the person using the support(s) including:
 - i. Monitoring for such things as pressure marks and skin breakdown.
 - ii. Guidelines for such things as positioning and tightness of straps.
 - iii. General maintenance and monitoring of the support(s).
 - iv. Cleaning method and schedule.
 - v. Monitoring for wear and tear.
 - vi. Contact information regarding questions or problems with the device.

6. Staff Training should be done to ensure that the support(s) is being used correctly and safely.
7. Review of the protocol should be conducted at least annually and upon change in condition.

AVOIDING MISUSE AS A RESTRAINT

It is important that a postural support is never accidentally used or misused as a restraint. Here are some tips to avoid restraining your resident with a postural support:

1. Only use the device with an order from the medical practitioner.
2. The device should never be applied in a way that restricts movement of the resident's hands or feet.
3. The device should be regularly removed.
4. The device should be fastened or tied in a manner that permits quick release or removal by the resident.