

Sample: Safe Patient Handling and Movement Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This policy describes ways to ensure that employees use safe patient handling and movement techniques in high-risk areas.
2. **POLICY:** XYZ Hospital wants to ensure that its patients/residents are cared for safely, while maintaining a safe work environment for employees. To accomplish this, direct care staff on high-risk patient/resident care areas should assess high-risk patient handling tasks in advance to determine the safest way to accomplish them. Additionally, mechanical lifting equipment and/or other approved patient handling aids should be used to prevent the lifting and handling of patients/residents except when absolutely necessary, such as in a medical emergency.
3. **PROCEDURES:**
 - A. Compliance: It is the duty of employees to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, as well as that of their co-workers and their patients during patient handling activities by following this policy. Non-compliance will indicate a need for retraining.
 - B. Patient Handling and Movement Requirements:
 - (1) Avoid hazardous patient handling and movement tasks whenever possible. If unavoidable, assess them carefully prior to completion.
 - (2) Use mechanical lifting devices and other approved patient handling aids for high-risk patient handling and movement tasks except when absolutely necessary, such as in a medical emergency.
 - (3) Use mechanical lifting devices and other approved patient handling aids in accordance with instructions and training
 - C. Training: Staff will complete and document training initially, annually, and as required to correct improper use/understanding of safe patient handling and movement. Supervisors should maintain training records for three years.
 - D. Mechanical lifting devices and other equipment/aids:
 - (1) Supervisors will ensure that mechanical lifting devices and other equipment/aids are accessible to staff.
 - (2) Supervisors shall ensure that mechanical lifting devices and other equipment/aids are maintained regularly and kept in proper working order.
 - (3) Supervisors and staff shall ensure that mechanical lifting devices and other equipment/aids are stored conveniently and safely.
 - E. Reporting of Injuries/Incidents:
 - (1) Nursing staff shall report to Occupational Health all strain/sprain incidents/injuries resulting from patient handling and movement.
 - (2) Supervisors shall maintain Accident Reports and supplemental injury statistics as required by the facility.
4. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. High-Risk Patient Handling Tasks: Patient handling tasks that have a high risk of musculoskeletal injury for staff performing the tasks. These include but are not limited to transferring tasks, lifting tasks, repositioning tasks, bathing patients in bed, making occupied beds, dressing patients, turning patients in bed, and tasks with long durations.
 - B. High-Risk Patient/Resident Care Areas: Inpatient hospital wards with a high proportion of dependent patients, requiring full assistance with patient handling tasks and activities of daily living, based on the dependency level of patients and the frequency with which patients are encouraged to be out of bed. These areas include Spinal Cord Injury Units, Nursing Home Care Units, and other specified areas.

- C. Manual Lifting: Lifting, transferring, repositioning, and moving patients using a caregiver's body strength without the use of lifting equipment/aids to reduce forces on the worker's musculoskeletal structure.
- D. Mechanical Patient Lifting Equipment: Equipment used to lift, transfer, reposition, and move patients. Examples include portable base and ceiling track mounted full body sling lifts, stand assist lifts, and mechanized lateral transfer aids.
- E. Patient Handling Aids: Equipment used to assist in the lift or transfer process. Examples include gait belts with handles, stand assist aids, sliding boards, and surface friction-reducing devices.

5. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY:

A. FACILITY DIRECTOR shall:

- (1) Support the implementation of this policy.
- (2) Furnish sufficient lifting equipment/aids to allow staff to use them when needed for safe patient handling and movement.
- (3) Furnish acceptable storage locations for lifting equipment/aids.
- (4) Provide staffing levels sufficient to comply with this policy.

B. SUPERVISORS shall:

- (1) Ensure high-risk patient handling tasks are assessed prior to completion and are completed safely, using mechanical lifting devices and other approved patient handling aids and appropriate techniques.
- (2) Ensure mechanical lifting devices and other equipment/aids are available, maintained regularly, in proper working order, and stored conveniently and safely.
- (3) Ensure employees complete initial and annual training, and training as required if employees show non-compliance with safe patient handling and movement. Maintain training records for a period of three years.
- (4) Collaborate with employee health staff in evaluating the Safe Patient Handling and Movement policy.
- (5) Refer all staff reporting injuries due to patient handling tasks to Occupational Health.
- (6) Maintain Accident Reports and supplemental injury statistics as required by the facility.

C. EMPLOYEES shall:

- (1) Comply with all parameters of this policy.
- (2) Use proper techniques, mechanical lifting devices, and other approved equipment/aids during performance of high-risk patient handling tasks.
- (3) Notify supervisor of any injury sustained while performing patient handling tasks.
- (4) Notify supervisor of need for retraining in use of mechanical lifting devices, other equipment/aids and lifting/moving techniques.
- (5) Notify supervisor of mechanical lifting devices in need of repair.
- (6) Supply feedback to Supervisor on Safe Patient Handling and Movement components.

D. ENGINEERING SERVICE shall maintain mechanical lifting devices in proper working order.

Source: James A. Haley Veterans Hospital/VHA VISN 8 Patient Safety Center of Inquiry, Tampa, FL.
Web site: www.patientsafetycenter.com.