



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Department of Mental Retardation
500 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02118

Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lieutenant Governor

JudyAnn Bigby, M.D.
Secretary

Elin M. Howe
Commissioner

Area Code (617) 727-5608
TTY: (617) 624-7590

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To: All DMR Providers
From: Elin Howe, Commissioner, DMR
Re: DMR Falls Prevention Campaign

The Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) has been collecting incident data through the HCSIS centralized electronic system since 2006. An analysis of injuries that were reported to be caused by falls was recently completed by the Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Research of U/Mass Medical School (CDDER). The report (Incident Data Report: Associated Injuries, Falls; January 2008 v.1) indicates a total of 1505 associated injuries that were caused by a fall during the September 2006 – August 2007 reporting period. In fact, 35% of all reported injuries in the year reviewed were related to a fall.

Falls have long been identified as a source of preventable and costly injury in hospital inpatient settings and the elderly population living in the community. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at even greater risk of injury in case of a fall due to limited mobility, neurological impairments that may affect balance, or use of medications that reduce bone density. While there are many programs in place to address falls in the general elderly population, there is very little literature available that could inform policy in the area of falls prevention in the population with developmental disabilities.

The good news is that with knowledge and awareness, many falls are preventable. With your help, DMR is undertaking a safety campaign to enhance awareness of issues associated with falls and increase attention to the need for reducing fall-related risk. This campaign will include:

- providing all DMR Providers with a free copy of the CD "Falls and People with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities". The CD contains a summary of falls risks, a PPT presentation for staff training, and tools and decision guides for a falls prevention campaign. It can be used by Providers to educate their staff about the risk of falls within their programs and guide them in developing interventions to reduce or prevent them.(Enclosed)
- a statewide training to provide an overview of the training materials provided on the CD and other information regarding strategies that focus on improving safety and reducing

falls. The training will be open to DMR personnel and Provider staff. It will be held on October 23, 2008 at the Worcester Library and will be repeated on October 29, 2008 at the Morse Institute Library in Natick. Please see the enclosed training announcement for details.

- engaging 3-5 Providers who serve individuals at high risk for falls to participate in pilot activities. Provider agencies that volunteer to participate will agree to establish specific falls prevention goals and track data (in addition to HCSIS incident reporting) in return for on-site enhanced staff training, technical assistance and provider-based data analysis support from CDDER.
- quarterly briefs on falls reduction posted on the DMR website to include highlights of Provider activities, progress data related to the DMR statewide goals and “tips” on specific strategies for improving safety and reducing falls and injuries.

Please share the enclosed CD with the person in your agency who is most likely responsible for implementing trainings and encourage them to attend one of the trainings in October. We are optimistic that with your help and our support, we can really reduce the risk of falls and injuries to the people we serve and thereby assure them a better quality of life. Please feel free to contact Sharon Oxx, Director of Health Services, with any questions. She can be reached at Sharon.Oxx@state.ma.us or at (617) 624-7779