

Partners in Quality Care

- December 2011 -

In-Home Aides Partners in Quality Care is a monthly newsletter published for member agencies.

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What You Will Learn:

- Home Care Safety tips for the Home Care worker
- Safety awareness in the home for the client and worker
- Personal Safety tips for the Home Care Worker

Happy Holidays!



Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love! ~Hamilton Wright Mabie

FOCUS ON SAFETY IN THE HOME- FOR THE CLIENT AND WORKER

Safety for the client as well as safety for the worker is an important focus for Home Care agencies. As part of the initial and ongoing assessments for client's receiving Home Care, determining the safety of the home environment is part of that assessment. Home Care agencies have an opportunity to educate the client's they serve regarding home safety for the client's safety as well as maintaining a safe home environment for the employee. Be sure to know your agency policies and procedures related to your personal safety and safety for the client. By adopting reasonable safety measures and acting responsibly, the Home Care provider may avoid many potentially dangerous situations and be better able to handle incidents when they do occur. Be sure to discuss your agency's safety policy with your supervisor. **Remember to be alert, observant and aware of your immediate environment.**

Safety Considerations for the client:

Older adults may have poor balance or slow reflexes and are more at risk for fractures and other injuries with falls. Also, your elderly clients may have bone diseases or conditions which would make them more prone to falls and fractures. Multiple medications also put elderly clients at risk of falling, as some medications can make a person drowsy or dizzy. Be sure to notify your supervisor if you think your clients are not taking their medications correctly.

Help guard against trips and falls- clear walking areas, secure area rugs, keep stairways well lit, report any holes in carpeting or flooring that is warped or buckling, encourage non skid treads on stairs, encourage your client's to use night lights.

It is our sincere wish that you and your family enjoy a Safe and Happy Holiday season!

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Safety in the home is multi-faceted. It includes fire safety, chemical hazards, the potential for natural disasters, animals, exposure to blood borne pathogens, infection control, unsanitary working conditions, unsafe structural problems in the home, sexual harassment, ethnic and religious harassment, violence, possible drug activity and back safety. A few safety-highlights follow:

Starting at the beginning - Traveling to the client's home:

- Do not deviate from your schedule. Your employer should know what clients you are seeing for the day. Before entering your car, check the back seat. When approaching your car, be sure to look under the car.
- Know where you are going. Keep a map with you in case you get lost. Observe windows, alleys and doorways for loiterers.
- Keep the doors locked when driving and keep the windows up.
- If you have access to a cellular phone, carry it with you.
- Maintain a quarter to half tank of gas at all times and have the car checked and serviced regularly
- Do not use cell phones or text while driving
- Carry an emergency car kit containing a flashlight, extra batteries, and flares.
- Use a detailed map or GPS

Fire Safety:

- Talk with your client's about the importance of smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Clients and/or their families should change the batteries every 6 months or with time changes.
- **Report to your supervisor if your patient smokes and wears oxygen. This is a fire hazard.**
- Never allow your client's to smoke in bed and be sure space heaters do not have clutter nearby.
- Make sure all electrical appliances are turned off.....especially before you leave the client.

Preparing for Natural Disasters:

- Learn the number for your local American Red Cross chapter.
- Learn which disasters could happen in your geographical area.
- Learn how to prepare for those disasters.
- **Talk with your supervisor about the emergency plans for your agency.**
- Talk with your patient about possible disasters.
- Ask your supervisor about the disaster plan for your client
- Make sure your client knows who and when to call for help. Post emergency numbers where they can easily locate them.
- Help your client prepare a disaster supply kit. **Your supervisor can help you with a complete list of the items for your area that your patient may need**



Chemical Hazards:

- Nursing Assistants can come in contact with hazardous chemicals in patients homes.
- These chemicals, such as cleaning products, may seem common, but can cause serious effects.
- You need to be aware of the chemicals that you are working with. Ask your supervisor about the agency's MSDS book. An MSDS is a Material Safety Data Sheet that contains information about the safe use of chemicals.
- Never mix chemicals - Never leave chemicals unattended - **Never work with chemicals that are not labeled.**
- Never work with chemicals in a closed area. You need plenty of ventilation when working with chemicals.
- Never pour undiluted bleach on urine. It mixes with the ammonia and creates toxic fumes.
- Report any problems that you experience to your supervisor

Other Safety Issues to Think About:

- ❖ **Sexual Harassment** - Client's and their family members often cross the employee/patient boundary when care is being provided. You should report to your supervisor if you are being spoken to inappropriately or touched in a sexual manner. Remember to keep a proper client/employee relationship.
- ❖ **Back safety** – Remember, if your instincts tell you that a client is too heavy for you, then do not attempt the transfer but call the office for assistance. Lift with your legs and not with your back. Bend at the knees and not at the waist. Use a lift whenever possible. Work to make sure that transfers are as smooth as possible. Remember that you are at risk for a back injury – only you can prevent injuries from happening. **Think smart.....Work Smart!!!!!!!!!!**
- ❖ **Violence/possible drug activity** - Frequent activity in and out of a home may be an indicator of drug activity. Be mindful not to accuse but to simply report the facts to your supervisor. Signs of violent behavior include: yelling, making threats and cursing at staff. If there is impending danger, leave the home and call the office and the office will report the activity to the authorities.
- ❖ **Infection control**- Follow your agency's infection control plan. Use appropriate personal protective equipment, including medical exam gloves and respiratory protection when necessary. Agencies are responsible for providing these types of supplies.

- Report any of the following to your supervisor: rodents, maggots, snakes or roaches.
- These all create an unsanitary environment for both the patient and the employee.
- The supervisor should work with the client and family to ensure that the home is sanitary to provide care in.

Resources: DHHS CDC National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health- Occupational Hazards in Home Healthcare, 2010.

About Patient Safety in the Home- National Hospice Organization

What Staff need to know about personal safety- Michelle White- 2006

Home Care Compass modules- AHHC- 2006

Remember that personal safety in the home incorporates many areas. Think before each and every activity. Be safe and keep your client's safe!!

EMPLOYEE USE OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES WHILE DRIVING...

...Have you considered all the risks?

The use of portable electronic devices (PEDs) such as cell phones, smart phones, laptops and GPS navigation systems has become a routine part of doing day-to-day business. Texting, emailing, talking and navigating are just some of the uses of these devices for conducting business in this fast paced, highly productive world in which we live.

While employers may be aware of the obvious benefits of allowing employees to use portable electronic devices to conduct business while driving, they may be unaware of the significant liability risks associated with PED use while driving.

Currently, there is mounting evidence supporting the dangerous link between PED usage and car accidents. Researchers across the country have found response times and attentiveness while using a PED are as low as those of drunk drivers. It is estimated that one in four crashes (1.6 million every year) involves a driver talking or texting on a cell phone.¹

Costs and Risks Employers Face as a Result of Distracted Driving

Health fringe benefit costs are the costs of fringe benefits paid because of illness and injury of employees and their dependents. They cover contributions to Workers' Compensation medical and disability insurance, health insurance, sick leave, Social Security disability insurance, life insurance, and private disability insurance, as well as insurance administration and overhead.

Non-fringe costs include motor vehicle property damage and liability insurance, crash-related legal expenses, and the costs of unreimbursed vehicle damage and replacement. In addition, employers pay taxes to help fund police, fire, and ambulance services. Employers also lose productivity when employees suffer injuries preventing them or their co-workers from working at full capacity. Recruiting and training workers to replace fatally injured or permanently disabled employees raises the bill employers pay for injuries.

Third Party liability claims for harm caused to non-employees involved in commercial crashes (crashes involving a vehicle on employer business). Employers can be held liable for commercial crashes that not only occur in company vehicles, but those crashes that occur in employees' personal vehicles while on company business. In 1998–2000, each year motor vehicle crashes killed an estimated 2,114 people while they were working and injured 353,000.²

As a result, if you have employees driving on company time, you need to be aware of your PED use exposure and take the appropriate steps to mitigate your risks. While there is no guaranteed defense to liability,

developing an appropriate Portable Electronic Device Policy, training employees about the dangers of using these devices while driving, and enforcing policies with signed written acknowledgments from employees can all help to limit an employer's potential liability.

In the policy, beyond setting clear-cut rules limiting portable electronic device use while driving, offer suggestions such as informing clients of driving schedules to avoid calls while on the road, putting devices in the glove box or out of sight while on the road, turning phones completely off while on the

road, pulling over to place or receive an important call or asking a passenger to handle device usage. Be sure to emphasize that while productivity is certainly important, more important is their safety and the safety of others on the road – safety that is neglected when using a portable electronic device.

Even with a comprehensive portable electronic device use policy, (courts may still hold employers responsible for any harm caused by employees while on company business), so it is important to ensure that your policy is being upheld and enforced. Be clear about the importance of following the policy and follow through with consequences if employees are found to be disobeying it.

■ ■ Texting While Driving: Statistics ■ ■

You are 4x more likely to have an accident if you are drinking and driving.

You are 8x more likely to have an accident if you are TEXTING while driving.

Employers should always be cognizant of their state’s laws and require employees to observe those regulations regarding cell phone or portable electronic device use

while driving. Include the current state law in your policy and require employees to review and re-sign it whenever the law changes. While state laws do not directly address employer liability, they have the potential to increase employer exposure for cell phone-related accidents. For more information about state requirements, access the Governor’s Highway Safety Association website at: www.statehighwaysafety.org.

In addition to updating your company Portable Electronic Device Policy and training program, employers should also review their insurance policies. For help assessing your company’s risk regarding these issues, sample resources, or for assistance in developing a Portable Electronic Device Policy, contact **Sonya Conner, Healthcare Risk Management Consultant at BB&T Insurance Services.**

¹National Safety Council 2010

²NHTSA’s report “*What Do Traffic Crashes Cost? Total Cost to Employers by State and Industry*” (1996)



For more information on AHHC’s Endorsed Risk Management & Insurance Provider please visit: www.homeandhospicecare.org and click on the icon on the web site

In-Home Aide newsletter- December 2011
POST-TEST on Safety

Name: _____

1. _____ for the worker as well as _____ for the client is an important focus for a Home Care agency (fill in the blanks)
2. As part of your responsibility for safety, you should (check all that apply)
 - a. Know your agency policies and procedures related to your personal safety and safety for the client
 - b. Act responsibly
 - c. Discuss your agency's safety policies with your supervisor
 - d. Be alert, observant and aware of your immediate environment
 - e. All of the above
3. Safety in the home is just related to avoiding trips and falls. (check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE
4. It is okay to talk on the phone or text on the phone while driving if you are trying to get information about where your client lives. (check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE
5. Safety tips related to using chemicals include (check all that apply)
 - a. Remember that everyday cleaning products are chemicals
 - b. You need to be aware of the chemicals you are working with- read directions and check with your agency about a material safety data sheet (MSDS)
 - c. Never work with chemicals that are not labeled
 - d. Never mix chemicals
 - e. You need to use undiluted bleach on urine to clean up urine
 - f. All of the above
6. Travel safety tips include (Check all that apply):
 - a. Notify your supervisor of your schedule and do not deviate from your schedule without notifying your supervisor
 - b. Keep the doors locked when driving
 - c. Carry an emergency car kit
 - d. Observe your surroundings for loiters
 - e. All of the above
7. It is sometimes okay for a client to smoke while they are using their oxygen. (Check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE
8. A back safety tip is to lift with your legs and not with your back. (Check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE
9. It is not your responsibility to report unsanitary conditions to your supervisor. (Check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE
10. Be sure to follow your agency's infection control plan as part of your safety plan. (Check the correct answer)
TRUE FALSE



Cell Phones Help or Problem



Cell phones are everywhere in the United States. They are in the hands of elementary school children as young as 7 years old, in the hands of teenagers all through the different grades, the people who work in this office and the cna's who work in the field. By themselves, they are not a problem, but when a person is more interested in text messaging or talking with their boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife, then there is a problem – a problem that needs to be addressed.

Recently, the Division of Medical Assistance surveyed home care patients about problems with aides, and one of the most mentioned problem was the constant use of the cell phone. “She comes in, asks me if there is anything to do, and then sits down on her cell phone for an hour or two. I’m tired of it. “

When the patients and the patients’ families start complaining, there’s a problem.

The children of patients become concerned and angry and will seek to change companies to a company that cares enough about its patients to ask the aides to turn off their cell phones and not use them while they are at work. This happens.

Recently, Channel 2 News did a news segment about contaminated things that we all come into contact with. Those things include: bathroom doors, commode seats, dirty dining tables, dirty menus at restaurants, computer keyboards, money and CELL PHONES.

“The research is demonstrating cell phones are particularly prone to being contaminated. They are rarely if ever cleaned; from the very nature of being touched by hands throughout the day, they have the potential for carrying pathogens.” Ramona Conner, MSN< RN, CNOR and manager of standards for a large hospital chain.

A study published in the June 2010 American Journal of Infection Control backs this manager’s assertion. This study reported that 45% of 288 health care providers’ cell phones carried infective organisms. Another study shows that 38 of 40 cna’s working in healthcare had bacterial contamination on their hands after first disinfecting their hands, then using their cell phones.

How many of you have been in a home and worked with a patient, answered your phone, put it down, picked it up later and then went to another patient? You are spreading infection when you do that. Furthermore, you are disrespecting your patient by denying them the care to which they are entitled by being on the phone instead of helping your patient. You are also stealing service time from the patient.

Every patient has a Care Plan that has to be followed and not changed except by a Doctor and Registered Nurse. The tasks assigned to you on the Care Plan need to be performed. Making and receiving non-emergency phone calls or texting while you are at work is against the standard of care you should be giving your patient.

Personal phone calls – while at work – should be kept to an absolute minimum. Tell your caller to contact you before or after work unless that it is an emergency.

An emergency is not “Can you bring us a loaf of bread? What are we having for dinner? I love you. “ etc., etc.

Please do not neglect your patient or your job by the indiscriminate use of a cell phone.

Angel Hands Home Care

December 2011

Cell Phone (check the correct answer)

1. True False Cell phones should not be used while at a patient's home unless it is a true emergency.
2. True False I am not following Universal Precautions if I answer my phone and then provide hands on care to my patient.
3. True False My patients do not mind if I call my boyfriend/girlfriend while I am at their home.
4. True False A cell phone really doesn't get dirty. It stays in my pocket except when I am using it.
5. True False I never use my cell phone while at work.
6. True False It doesn't matter if you use your cell phone as long as you did your tasks for the day.
7. True False I am not ignoring my patient if I text message while at work.
8. True False If my patient is eating, it is ok for me to send a text message or call my mama.
9. True False If I am supposed to be watching my patient while she is eating, and I step away to use the cell phone, the patient chokes and dies, I can be charged with a crime of neglecting my patient and involuntary manslaughter.

Grade: _____ My Name: _____

I understand the importance of restricting my use of a cell phone while at work.

Seal _____ Date _____

My Name