SAFE PATIENT HANDLING
IN LONG-TERM CARE:
A MINNESOTA UPDATE

THE MINNESOTA SAFE PATIENT HANDLING ACT IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT DIRECT CARE WORKERS

» The MN Safe Patient Handling Act requires every nursing home to maintain a written safe patient handling program and committee.

» Employers must provide assistive equipment, such as Hoyer and sit-to-stand lifts, to minimize manual patient handling. Research shows gait belts and lift sheets are not enough to prevent injuries.

» Safe patient handling practices can benefit any long-term or transitional care environment, including assisted living.

THE RISK OF PATIENT HANDLING INJURY IS HIGHEST AMONG NURSING ASSISTANTS

» Each year in nursing homes, one in 40 nursing assistants files a workers’ compensation claim for a lost-time musculoskeletal disorder. Half are away from work for 12+ days.

» Compared to registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants have higher rates of injuries caused by patient handling, equipment and violence.

» Nursing assistants are less likely than nurses to receive traditional workers’ compensation benefits and more likely to receive a settlement. Reasons may include difficulty proving an injury is work-related or preference for fast payment and returning to work.

PATIENT HANDLING INJURIES HAVE DECLINED UNDER THE MN SAFE PATIENT HANDLING ACT

» Lost-time claims for patient handling injuries declined by 38% between 2005 and 2016. Claims for all other injuries and illnesses declined by 20%.

» Patient handling injuries resulting in temporary and permanent worker disability declined.

» Fifty-five percent of nursing homes reduced their patient handling injury claims. Forty-four percent saw reductions in claims for all other injuries and illnesses.

» Injury reductions may be even greater in nursing homes with well-developed safe patient handling programs. More research is needed.

MINNESOTA NURSING HOMES HAVE ROOM TO IMPROVE

Nursing homes that are nonprofit, not affiliated with a hospital, outside of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area, and those with low staff retention have higher patient handling injury claim rates.

The 2018 rate of OSHA-recordable injuries and illnesses in Minnesota nursing homes (7.8/100 workers) remains elevated compared to the national average (6.2/100 workers).

LEARN MORE

» If your organization could benefit from free patient handling consultation, contact osha.consultation@state.mn.us, 651-284-5060 or 800-657-3776.

» If your organization would like to apply for financial assistance to purchase patient handling equipment, contact dli.grants@state.mn.us, 651-284-5060 or 800-731-7232.

» For sample safe patient handling programs and guidance, visit: www.dli.mn.gov/business/workplace-safety-and-health/mnosha-wsc-safe-patient-handling

» For information about this research, email Christina Rosebush, PhD at rose0611@umn.edu