

8.1.24 Ergonomics (addendum)

Student Lifting

General Information

Acquiring proper techniques and habits for lifting students is essential for both employee and student health and safety. Lifting is a natural part of everyday life, but lifting correctly does not always come naturally. Employees who have experienced injuries know how it can negatively impact their personal lives and their ability to meet the educational needs of students.

It is important to remember that the size or age of a child does not change the need to use safe procedures when lifting. A student does not typically need lifting unless in an emergency, but a student with motor impairment may need to be lifted several times daily. Lifting properly is especially important when working with students with special needs as they may need more physical help, can move suddenly and have little control over their muscles.

Definitions

Lift: is a procedure used to carry a student from one place to another. The student is not supporting their own weight when moving.

Mechanical Lift: is a powered device used to lift a student from one surface to another.

Program Planning Process: a team approach to planning the appropriate education for students with special needs.

Sliding or Transfer Board: is an assistive device that helps students move from one place to another by sliding across the board.

Slings: is material purposely designed for lifting that is placed under a student and attached to the lifting device by straps. There are specific slings for use with specific mechanical lifts.

Transfer: a procedure used to assist a student to move from one surface to another. The student is supporting their own weight or most of their own weight when moving.

Transfer Belt: is an assistive device that helps students move from one place to another by placing the belt around the waist and an employee grips the straps and helps with the movement.

Roles and Responsibilities

In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers and employees share responsibility for working safely. When providing the required supports for students, especially for medical and personal care, the roles and responsibilities outlined from the OHS Act are :

- The SSRSB will take every reasonable precaution to:
 - ensure employee and student health and safety. This includes assessing any risks for students and staff associated with lifting and mobility needs for students through the program planning process.
 - provide and keep equipment associated with student lifting and mobility in proper and safe condition. Specialized equipment is provided according to SSRSB's Student Services policy #370 and administrative procedures.
 - provide necessary information, instruction and training, as identified through the program planning process.
 - provide necessary supervision. Supervisors will communicate and reinforce expectations for fulfillment of job functions, including following established lifting procedures for students as developed by physiotherapy and occupational therapists. Any concerns brought forward by employees are to be addressed promptly and collaborative solutions sought. Performance issues will be handled in accordance with applicable union or employment contracts.
 - ensure that all employees are familiar with any health or safety hazards.
 - ensure that employees are familiar with the proper use of equipment used for student lifting and mobility, as identified through the program planning process.
- Every employee, while at work, shall:
 - cooperate with SSRSB and take every reasonable precaution, in the circumstances, to protect their own and everyone's safety
 - ensure any safety procedures and equipment associated with student lifting and mobility that is approved for use by SSRSB is used as instructed. Any challenges in doing so are to be reported to their Supervisor immediately. This is especially important with new equipment or changes to previously established lifting procedures.
 - report immediately to a Supervisor if any condition, equipment or aspect associated with lifting and mobility may be dangerous to the employee or any other person's health or safety. If the matter is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction, they shall refer to the SSRSB Complaint Procedure found in the OHS Program Manual.

Assessing and Controlling Risks:

Prior to lifting, an employee shall assess for any risks and reduces the risks as much as possible by planning ahead. Consider what is about to be done from start to finish:

- student weight
- lifting heights
- distance to be travelled
- direction changes
- path to be travelled
- where hands will be placed
- postural changes throughout the lift
- employee personal physical abilities

The best lifting method that reduces any risks identified for both the employee and student shall be selected. Safety controls to limit risks are listed in order:

1. Avoid unnecessary student lifting. If possible, use alternate methods such as transferring.
2. Apply knowledge of basic or other lifting methods (as identified in student individual program plans)
3. Use mechanical devices to assist with the lift (as identified in student individual program plans)
4. Request assistance from another employee
5. Participate in personal health and wellness

Basic Manual Lifting Principles

Most students do not typically require manual lifting, but if there are extenuating circumstances that would require this method, the following basic lifting principles shall be applied:

- Students should be told before they are picked up. Forewarning gives the student a chance for their bodies and mind to prepare to be moved and prevents startling. Additional instruction for students, such as raising arms or leaning ahead may also be helpful. Manual lifting should not take place if it is not known if there are special physical requirements for the student, such as additional back and neck support, unless there is an eminent danger.
- Basic lifting principles apply:
 - o Bending at the knees helps absorb extra weight and reduce spinal stress.
 - o Feet kept shoulder width apart provides a solid base.
 - o Students should be held close, ideally between shoulders and hip height, to keep the weight in the ideal strength zone. This also helps keep the student secure and provides support during movement.
 - o Twisting should be avoided by facing the direction of movement.

Other lifting methods:

Emergency rescue carries are methods to be used in an emergency to move an individual short distances to safety, shelter or better means of transportation. Training on these methods are provided as part of first aid training for designated employees (such as bus drivers and Teacher Assistants) and may include:

- drag carry
- blanket or foot drag
- piggy back
- cradle carry
- human crutch
- firefighter's carry
- two-hand or four-hand seat
- chair carry
- extremities carry
- blanket lift with 4 bearers

Any physical challenges for students that require student specific strategies and resources will be identified through individual program planning process. If required, additional specialized training for lifting methods or mechanical assistance identified in students individual program plans will be provided on a case-by-case basis and must be utilized. Employees affected will be identified and supported by physiotherapy and occupational therapists and reference sheets for any specialized equipment procedure will be provided (sample in Appendix A). Lifting and transferring procedures that require two employees will be identified. Employees should wear appropriate personal clothing when operating mechanical equipment (ie, shoes that provide toe protection and no loose or dangling clothing that may interfere).

Additional Prevention

All employees must take reasonable steps to maintain an orderly and safe work and learning environment. This includes taking initiative to ask for assistance from other employees when needed. When asked to assist, it is vital that all employees act in a respectful, cooperative manner to participate in the implementation of individual program plans and attend to the health, safety and comfort of students.

Employee duties that include medical and personal care of students, especially lifting, can be physically demanding. Employees are encouraged to participate in personal health and wellness initiatives. It is important that employees take advantage of rest periods to relax tired muscles, and to report any discomfort or difficulties when lifting or transferring students, as these may be the early indicators of a potential problem. Over time muscles, bones, and supporting structures can change and lose strength. Participating in regular physical activity tones muscles, reduces stress, strengthens the heart, lungs, increases energy levels, and helps maintain a health body weight. Physical

activity is something that everyone can do by looking for simple ways to increase activities every day, such as:

- taking a walk once a day
- taking the stairs instead of the elevator
- spending less time in front of a computer or television
- playing actively with children

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE ONLY - NOT FOR USE
(these reference sheets will be customized
and provided for individual mechanical lift
By Rehab Services staff)

“Student Name”
Mechanical Lift Procedure

- 1) Two person Mechanical Lift (*make, model of lift*) :
 - a) Lead person controls the lift
 - b) Helper controls student's body.
- 1) Sling (*make, model, size of sling*), under student at all times
- 2) Lock wheelchair breaks, tilt chair, remove foot box and footrests
- 3) Position lift around chair (Lead), monitor student's body (Helper) and keep hand on lift arm to prevent head from hitting the lift arm.
- 4) Undo seat harness
- 5) Sling Straps:
 - a) Head sling strap: farthest blue sling straps on lift hook closest to student
 - b) Middle sling strap: grey sling straps on center lift hook
 - c) First leg sling strap: grey sling straps on center lift hook
 - d) Second leg sling strap: place farthest blue sling straps (between legs) on lift hook farthest from student.
- 6) Lead person controls lift and Helper person ensures student's arms stay inside the sling on lap