



## Specialized Residential Staff and Individuals at High Risk for Fall Educational Handout

### **Purpose:**

This educational resource is for direct care workers (DCW) and direct support professionals (DSP) in specialized residential settings and areas such as private homes, workshops, and the community.

### **Background:**

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), falls are the leading cause of injury and injury death among adults 65 years of age and older. One out of every five falls may result in serious injury and falling is the leading cause of traumatic brain injury.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. Assist:**

Assist in keeping areas that the individual may walk clear of clutter, ensure electric cords are close to the wall and not in walkways, ensure that mobility aids such as canes or walkers are within reach of the person served, follow the individual plan of service (IPOS) and if the IPOS does not have any items related to falls but staff are aware of a previous fall communicate this with the case holder. Use assistive devices including but not limited to gait belts and wheelchairs only when ordered by an appropriate prescriber.

#### **2. Observe/Report/Monitor:**

Observe, report, and monitor changes in gait or if the individual seems weaker as soon as able. Report immediately to a medical provider or call 911 if there are observed changes in level of consciousness or confusion. Observe for medication side effects especially when there is a medication change. Side effects like dizziness or drowsiness must be communicated to the prescriber. Observe the house/location for issues such as broken stairs, loose handrails, uneven floors, loose rugs, or carpets, snow and ice in areas individuals must travel. Report these immediately to a supervisor. Monitor equipment such as mobility aids (canes/walkers/wheelchairs) and car/van steps and grab handle for issues. Report issues to the home or location supervisor. Note: Repairing mobility aids should only be done by appropriately trained professionals.

#### **3. Encourage:**

Encourage individuals to participate in activities and exercises as recommended by their primary care provider. Encourage individuals to participate and follow their medical provider's orders, including the individual wearing glasses or contacts. Encourage other staff and family of the individual to follow medical provider instructions when applicable. Encourage the individual to wear proper fitting non-slip foot coverings or shoes when walking.

**Resources:** Staff are encouraged to consider "Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Safety Checklist for Older Adults" (Exhibit A) from the CDC to guide care givers in making their home environment safer. Information is adapted from the CDC STEADI initiative.

<https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-CheckForSafety-508.pdf>