

## Positive Talk

*A resource for Carewest staff, residents, clients and families about a culture of safety in our sites.*



Positive Talk is a Carewest-developed series of booklets intended to help you communicate effectively and positively with the people around you. This module highlights some safety-related scenarios that can potentially occur at Carewest and offers suggestions as to the best way to handle those situations. It touches upon the importance of prevention, caution, attention to the task at hand and learning from our experiences at Carewest.



# Safety First

Carewest is committed to the safety of our residents, clients, families, employees, volunteers and visitors in our sites. We strive to provide a safe environment and to integrate practices that reduce risks and hazards into our everyday activities.

Carewest believes everyone, including volunteers and contractors, is responsible for their own personal safety and for looking out for the safety of others. Safety is a key part of every job – at every level of the organization. We are committed to promoting a culture of safety that includes prevention, timely reporting, follow-up and learning from events to prevent them from happening again.

Through this booklet and other publications, Carewest aims to inform and educate everyone about their role in safety, recognizing that choice and independence must be balanced with potential risk to safety. Carewest encourages clients and families to help staff identify and report safety issues.

An environment of optimal safety can only be achieved with the co-operation, involvement, awareness and action of everyone.

The following pages highlight some of the common situations that can occur everyday at our sites, and offer suggestions about keeping everyone safe. You can use this booklet as a reference when handling certain types of situations that may arise within a health care setting.

# 1. Scenario

## Communicating to prevent an incident

The evening shift has just begun and before leaving work for the day, Melissa tells the night staff that Mrs. Fitzgerald takes medication in the evening that makes her sleepy.



### Helpful Approaches

What might be a safe transfer during the day may not be safe a few hours later. Keeping staff informed of changing needs can help in the prevention of workplace accidents or injuries.

*"Usually Mrs. Fitzgerald transfers herself from her wheelchair into bed but since her evening pills make her sleepy, you should use a mechanical lift to transfer her safely."*

### Focus On

- Educating staff on different shifts about the specifics of each client.
- Sharing important information about the clients with co-workers.
- Making sure everyone knows about potential safety hazards.

## 2. Scenario

### Open communication

It's time for Dana's medication and Evelyn is helping administer her pills. Dana notices the pills are a different colour than what she's taken in the past.



### Helpful Approaches

Don't be afraid to report safety issues before they become incidents. We are all working together as a team to deliver the best possible care for our residents and clients. If you see a potential hazard, bring it to somebody's attention before an incident happens. Mistakes do happen and at Carewest, we believe each mistake is an opportunity to learn how to do things better.

*"Of course, Dana! Let me double-check that your order hasn't been changed. I want to make sure you get the right medication!"*

### Focus On

- Taking responsibility, being honest and reporting an issue or incident.
- Being open and learning from the situation.
- Responding to all client feedback and concerns.

# 3. Scenario

## Taking steps to work safely

Daniel and Nancy are getting ready to clean the tub room. They mix the cleaning solution before deciding to go to lunch.



### Helpful Approaches

Even though Daniel and Nancy are in the middle of a project, they decided it would be safer to lock up their cleaning supplies and solutions while they went for lunch. This ensured no one could accidentally be harmed by the chemicals in the solution. Taking those extra steps to work safely will help prevent an accident or injury.

*"Before we go, let's lock up our cleaning solution and bucket in the cabinets to keep everyone safe."*

### Focus On

- Storing all hazardous products safely.
- Cleaning up after a project you are doing, if you are leaving the area.
- Taking steps to work safely.

## 4. Scenario

### Responsibility

Many visitors to the care centre have been taking advantage of the new hand sanitizer dispenser mounted at the front door. The receptionist noticed a woman looking preoccupied as she rushed through the doors, past the dispenser.



### Helpful Approaches

It's everyone's responsibility to ensure that our residents, clients, staff and visitors are practicing safe behaviours. If you notice something that might pose a safety risk, you should do what you can to reduce that risk.

*"Excuse me! Did you notice our new hand sanitizer dispenser we've mounted at the front door? Could you please use it - we've had a cold going around in here recently!"*

### Focus On

- Being alert to activities that could put others at risk.
- Educating others about safe behaviours.
- Taking responsibility for the safety of our residents and clients.

## What's Important

1.

**Gaps in communication are the leading cause of safety incidents.**

2.

**It's not about who was involved – it's about learning from the incident to ensure it doesn't happen again.**

3.

**It's important to act promptly, alert others or address the situation so that measures can be taken to prevent an incident from getting worse.**

4.

**Look for the causes of the incident to ensure it doesn't happen again.**

5.

**Everyone should do what they can to ensure their own safety and the safety of those around them.**

6.

**Take the time to work safely – rushing through tasks, even if they are routine, is a leading cause of incidents.**

7.

**Safety incidents rarely have one cause – it is important to consider all the contributing factors.**

### **Tips for staying safe:**

- Be alert and don't be afraid to ask questions.
- When in doubt, check it out!
- Staff should be familiar with Carewest policies and know where to find them.
- Be open to questions and feedback from residents, clients and their families about their care and the Carewest environment.

# A Culture of Safety

Carewest is committed to promoting a safe and respectful environment that provides quality, safe and compassionate care for residents and clients and a safe work environment for staff, volunteers and others.

A culture of safety is achieved by fostering an attitude of prevention, timely incident reporting, following up on all the incidents that occur and determining the causes of an incident through investigations that occur in an environment of no blame.

Everyone has a role to play in this process and everyone should feel secure in the knowledge that reporting an event is important and will not be used against the person making the report.

**Prevention:** Prevention is the best way to avoid safety incidents. Taking the time to work safely and communicating with your co-workers are ways to prevent incidents from occurring.

**Timely reporting:** Carewest has forms and processes to collect the details that help us learn about the event and then, learn from the event.

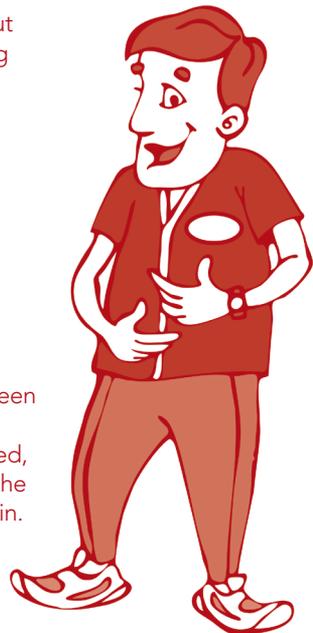
**Following up:** It is important to talk to everyone involved in a situation to clarify what happened. Managers and staff, residents and clients must work together to openly identify these factors and how they could be avoided in the future.

**Investigating:** We focus on learning, not finding fault or blaming someone. Investigating an incident without blaming or finding fault is an important step to finding out the causes of an incident and correcting it.

Once the review is completed, we look at the recommendations:

- What can we do better to reduce risk?
- Can we change a process?
- Can we provide something different (e.g. different equipment)?
- Is a design change possible?
- Do we need more education or training?

It's important that once the recommendations have been put in place, all people affected by the incident have been notified. They need to know we have investigated, identified and followed through with ways to correct the situation to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.



# 5. Scenario

## Choosing to work safely

It's time to transfer Mr. Kelly out of bed for his morning shower. Andrea was supposed to meet Stacy in his room to help lift him into his wheelchair. Andrea is late and Stacy wonders if she should just try and transfer him herself.



### Helpful Approaches

Cutting corners to save time is like taking an unnecessary risk – you might save a few minutes here and there but that won't matter if you are risking your own safety or the safety of your co-workers, residents or clients.

Choosing to be safe is everyone's responsibility and an important one.

*"Stacy, let's just wait for Andrea. I'm not in a rush and I don't want you to hurt yourself!"*

### Focus On

- Taking the time to do it right and be safe.
- Feeling comfortable about raising safety concerns.
- Asking for help when you need it.

## 6. Scenario

### Responding

*It's break time and Sonia, Brianna and Logan are enjoying lunch in the staff room. Suddenly the fire alarm goes off.*



#### Helpful Approaches

Fire drills and other emergency codes are an important part of ensuring everyone's safety. Knowing the emergency codes and following the procedures during drills or emergency events is something everyone should take seriously.

*"Let's make the right decision and REACT. Follow me!"*

#### Focus On

- Being alert to emergency calls or alarms.
- Being familiar with the codes and leading the way in an emergency.
- Taking responsibility for your own safety and that of your residents and clients.

# 7. Scenario

## Sharing responsibility

It's lunchtime and Braden is serving meals to Carewest clients. He accidentally knocks a cup of water off his tray and onto the floor. He turns to leave immediately to look for a mop but a family member is close-by and offers to help.



### Helpful Approaches

Mrs. Jones didn't spill the water, but she reacted quickly to prevent a possible slip and fall. Sharing responsibility for everyone's safety is important.

*"I saw a housekeeping cart nearby with a mop. Let me go grab it for you!"*

### Focus On

- Recognizing potential safety hazards.
- Offering a helping hand.
- Being part of the solution – safety is everyone's concern.

## 8. Scenario

### Disclosure

Lee is allergic to peanuts and accidentally ate some during lunch. After having a mild allergic reaction, which required some medical help, Lee recovered. Later that day, her mother came to visit.



### Helpful Approaches

Although we try to keep our residents and clients as safe as possible, incidents do happen. Disclosing errors or incidents to family members is an important part of providing open, honest communication.

*"She did very well Mrs. Kay! I'm glad you're here - I was trying to call you. Lee is doing fine. She ate some peanuts and had a mild allergic reaction but recovered well after the doctor saw her. We are investigating to find out how this happened."*

### Focus On

- Keeping residents, clients and families informed when incidents happen.
- Reassuring families, residents and clients that we take time to investigate incidents and that they will be involved in that process.
- Providing open, honest communication.

# 9. Scenario

## Communicating outcomes

Randi is posting the minutes from yesterday's staff meeting on the bulletin board, during which the outcomes from a recent safety incident were discussed. A co-worker wants to know why she's posting the minutes.



### Helpful Approaches

The learnings from an investigation of a safety incident will be made available to help everyone improve their processes. It's important for all staff – even those who weren't involved in the incident – to be informed about what happened and how we have made some changes to improve the process.

*"I'm posting the minutes because not everyone was able to attend the meeting – they probably don't know exactly what was decided. It's important that all staff have the facts and know what we will do differently from now on."*

### Focus On

- Informing yourself.
- Informing others.

## Did you know...

- Good health care starts with good communication. Don't hesitate to talk openly. Everyone – staff, clients and their families – shouldn't just think it but say it. ASK questions, LISTEN to the answers and TALK about any concerns you have.
- Carewest staff report just over 3,400 unusual occurrences annually. Of these, less than two per cent result in significant harm. A strong safety culture recognizes that risk exists and reporting and addressing these kinds of incidents help us reduce other adverse events.
- Open disclosure to clients and families about an adverse event leads to more understanding, respect and involvement in decision-making and supports safe care.
- The Employee Health and Safety team is available to help identify, assess and advise staff on safety issues at Carewest sites. They can be reached at 403-943-8182.
- Every year, all staff refresh their training on using mechanical lifts to ensure safe client transfers, checking tub temperatures, operating the tubs and disinfecting them safely.
- Health care infections are as much a client safety issue as falls and medication errors and are spread mainly on our hands. We can infect others directly or through contaminating the environment. Hand hygiene, equipment and environmental cleaning are key.
- Carewest will train Independent Care Providers on request on how to use a mechanical lift, how to safely bathe a client or how to safely feed a client.
- Carewest staff, including Recreation Therapists and Activity Convenors take a mandated food safety course every year so that food can be delivered to clients in a safe manner.
- Carewest's Clinical Standards and Nursing Practice Leader is available to help you investigate and learn from any client safety incident – even if it didn't result in any significant harm. She can be reached at 403-686-8123.

In support of our Carewest Frame of Reference,  
our Philosophy of Care is:

**“To provide our residents and clients with  
quality care in safe, comfortable and  
supportive environments.”**

The Guiding Principles to the Philosophy include working together to:

- Preserve and promote **dignity** through respectful, individualized approaches to care;
- Provide **kind** and **compassionate** care and service;
- Foster **supportive relationships** between all staff, clients, families and communities;
- Foster an environment of **learning** to promote excellence in care and service.

