

Building a Successful Client Handling Program

This OSACH Fast Fact is intended to help workers, JHSC members, supervisors and managers understand the importance of building a successful transfers and lifts program for caregivers, outline the elements of a successful program, and identify how OSACH can help in this venture.

Background

Back injuries and related muscle strains are the most common injuries among caregivers. Most of these injuries are related to moving clients, either through lifting, transferring or repositioning. A review of the lost-time injury (LTI) count for the Ontario community and health care sector demonstrates an overall increase in lost-time injuries from 1997 to 2003, followed by a gradual decline in the years 2004 to 2007 (Figure 1). Despite this decline:

- Over 8,923 compensable LTIs occurred in the year 2007 for Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) rate groups served by OSACH
- 2,133 of these injuries were due to client handling (WSIB Data Source:PDM* Injury Analysis by SWA cube Snapshot date: August 31, 2008)
- The average cost of a WSIB claim escalated to \$21,300 in 2007 (WSIB 2007) and to \$24,133 in 2008 (WSIB 2008).

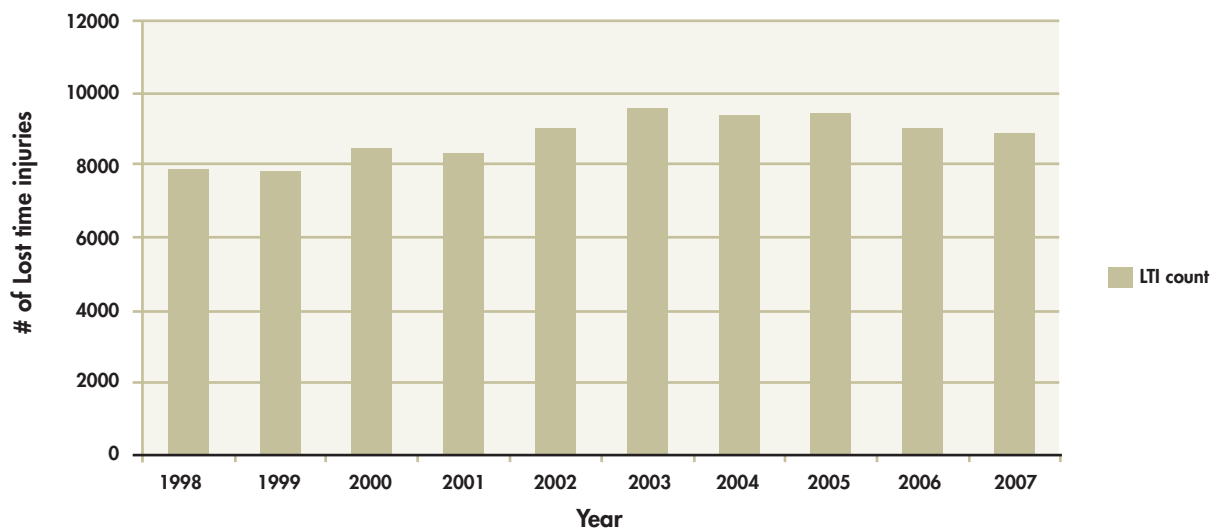


Figure 1: Lost-time Injury Count for Health and Community Care Sector
(WSIB Data Source: EIW* Claim Cost Analysis Snapshot schema, Snapshot date: July 31, 2008)

Preventing Client Handling Injuries

A client handling injury prevention program is an important component of an overall health and safety program. OSACH *Handle with Care™* is a control program that goes beyond training caregivers in client transfers, lifts and repositioning techniques. This program assists employers and caregivers to recognize, assess, control and evaluate the workplace hazards with respect to the handling of clients

Five Elements of an Effective Client Handling Program

1. Senior Leadership Commitment

The organization must have the ongoing commitment of senior leadership in order for the program to be sustained. Evidence of this ongoing commitment includes:

- Allocation of the appropriate fiscal resources – an annual budget for the development, implementation and maintenance of the program. This includes the maintenance of the lifting equipment and ongoing assessment of needs for further equipment.
- Program Champion – senior leadership must assign the responsibility of the program to a senior manager.
- Multidisciplinary Committee: This committee is vital component of the program beginning from the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation. The committee should represent front-line workers, supervisors and any resource personnel that could contribute to this program. In a larger facility, this may include a staff educator, physiotherapist or occupational therapist and a health and safety specialist.

2. Needs Assessment

The following categories of information should be gathered and analyzed at the assessment and evaluative processes:

- Incident/accident analysis
- Client mobility assessment
- Equipment needs
- Environmental barriers
- Organizational challenges

3. Minimal Lift Policy and Supporting Procedures

The Client Handling Program is designed to control potential and existing hazards associated with client handling. Its basic elements are:

- Minimal lift policy
- Procedures
- Client mobility assessments
- Communication processes
- Client handling techniques and equipment
- Pre-use inspection of equipment
- Preventive maintenance of equipment
- Purchasing of client mechanical lift equipment and devices
- Infection control and cleaning
- Reporting and investigation of hazards, incidents and accidents
- Evaluative and continuous quality improvement
- Education and training should include:
 - Program goals and objectives
 - Legislation
 - Overview of injury demographics, statistics and current trends/issues
 - Musculoskeletal disorder awareness – anatomy, physiology, body mechanics, prevention
 - Client handling policy and procedures, and expectations of compliance
 - Client mobility assessments
 - Selection of accepted client handling techniques
 - Competency in performance of transfer, lift, lateral transfer/slide and reposition techniques
 - Communication methods including documentation (type and location), forms, use of the assessment cards and logos, etc.
 - Selection and use of equipment

4. Implementation and/or Program Enhancement

The steps in the implementation of a program are:

- Summarize and rank department injury rates and costs
- Conduct and summarize unit/department needs
- Summarize the needs of the unit/department
- Prepare for education/training

5. Program Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Measure and evaluate program indicators
- Determine whether the program goals and objectives have been met
- Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Make recommendations regarding quality improvements to the program
- Ensure sustainability and maintenance of an effective program

What Have We Learned From the Ontario Patient Lift Initiative?

From 2003-2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MoHLTC) released a total of \$103 million in funds for the purchase of client mechanical lifts in hospitals and long-term care homes. The combined efforts of the MoHLTC and OSACH have resulted in the implementation of over 12,000 new mechanical lifts from 2003 to 2006, the majority of them ceiling lifts. However, due to the short time frame for the implementation of the program and installation of the lifts, OSACH has learned of the many challenges and barriers that organizations still face. They include:

- Tracking and analyzing injury rates
- Insufficient hands-on training of the front-line staff in lift, transfer and repositioning techniques
- Insufficient general program training, often due to staffing changes
- Non-compliance with program standards by front-line staff
- Dealing with aggressive clients during the client handling tasks
- Lack of use of lift equipment
- Improper selection and use of slings
- Lack of staff comfort level with client handling devices
- Repositioning of clients remains a challenge
- Lack of continued maintenance of equipment
- Caregivers not performing client mobility assessments, perhaps due to lack of education

How Can OSACH Help?

OSACH is committed to preventing and reducing injuries and illnesses in health and community care by providing programs, products and services that support the internal responsibility system and self-reliance in the workplace. Demonstrating this commitment, OSACH offers a number of products and services aimed at assisting you in optimizing the use of your mechanical lifts and preventing employee injuries.

Fast Facts free to download from our website:

Building a Successful Transfers and Lifts Program for Caregivers,
http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/ffacts_e/lap_182.pdf

How Much Can You Lift?, http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/ffacts_e/lap_174.pdf

How Does My Back Work?, http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/ffacts_e/lap_183.pdf

Repetitive Strain Injury: Could You Please Repeat That ... Again and Again and Again?,
http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/ffacts_e/frsie143.pdf

Posters and cards free to download from our website:

OSACH Handle with Care: Logo Cards, <http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/LogoCards/LogoCards.shtml>

Client Mobility Review, <http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/posters/pclie501.pdf>

Back Care Exercise Program, <http://www.hchsa.on.ca/products/posters/pexee519print.pdf>

Education Sessions

Client Handling Program Development and Implementation – half-day workshop offered by OSACH

This workshop focuses on building a successful and sustainable client handling program specific to your organization. Content of the workshop includes:

- The six steps in planning a client-handling program
- How to conduct a program needs assessment
- How to develop a minimal/safe lifting policy
- How to develop comprehensive procedures to support the implementation of a client handling program
- How to implement a comprehensive lift/transfer education program

Who should attend:

The Steering Committee overseeing the development and implementation of a minimal lift program and a comprehensive lift/transfer education program.

Client Handling Program Enhancement – half-day workshop offered by OSACH

This workshop, focusing on enhancing your current program, will be an interactive session engaging participants in discussion about their program challenges. This will be an opportunity for organizations to get hands-on experience using the new tools and resources of the recently revised Handle with Care (3rd edn.). Content of the workshop includes:

- How to track and analyze client handling injury rates
- How to thoroughly investigate client handling injuries to ensure appropriate controls are effective
- How to conduct client mobility assessments
- How to recognize insufficient general program training
- Tips for promoting program compliance
- Dealing with aggressive clients during client handling tasks
- Equipment pre-use inspections – safety considerations for clients and staff
- Review of equipment and devices
- Updated client handling logs

It will also feature organizations that have exemplary programs and key strategies to be successful.

Who should attend:

Steering Committee members currently overseeing the development and implementation of a minimal lift program and a comprehensive lift/transfer education program.

Hands-on Client Handling Techniques: Train-the-Trainer – half-day workshop offered in partnership with the Canadian Back Institute (CBI)

This session, conducted by CBI Health, will provide organizations with the opportunity of training program leaders in safe and appropriate client handling techniques and body mechanics. Participants will be given an opportunity for hands-on practice of the client handling techniques. The content of the workshop includes:

- Assessing mobility status
- Correct use of lifting devices
- Client transfer techniques
- Client repositioning techniques
- Selection and positioning of slings
- Correct body mechanics and postures

Who should attend:

The core group of staff (managers/supervisors and front-line staff) who will then be able to provide ongoing continuity of training within their own organization. This training will complement vendors' equipment-specific training that has to be arranged by the organization.



The information contained in Fast Facts is correct at the time of publication.

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