

MOBILITY SUPPORTS

Background

Peace River School Division welcomes students with diverse needs. The welfare of all students is of paramount importance to ensure all students' school experience to be welcoming, caring, respectful and safe.

These guidelines are based on Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines and Alberta Health Services (AHS) Guidelines. Each student will have unique needs for consideration. To ensure the safety of all students and staff, all students requiring ongoing mobility support should be referred to an occupational therapist (OT) or physiotherapist (PT) for assessment to inform development of a mobility plan. Mobility support training will be provided to staff by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist as required.

Staff may be required to provide varying levels of physical support (minimal, moderate, maximal) when providing mobility support. Staff will work in close partnership with parents and other professionals to share information and provide continuity of care.

Definition

Types of Mobility Supports

Transfer: A student is assisted to move safely from one surface to another with full or partial weight bearing. A transfer belt may be used. Some students may require additional equipment (e.g., transfer board).

Lift: A student is assisted to move safely from one surface to another without the student weight bearing.

Positioning or Repositioning: The student requires physical assistance to position or adjust their body position on a surface such as a plinth, wheelchair or chair.

Ambulation: A student who is assisted by 1 or 2 people to walk safely with full or partial weight bearing. The student may use mobility equipment like a walker, gait trainer, transfer belt, and/or cane or crutches.

Levels of Assistance

Independent: A student independently transfers from one surface to another. Stand by support or supervision may be required.

Weight Bearing: The amount of weight a student supports through their legs with control.

Standby Assist: The student performs transfer without assistance but not yet consistently and requires reminders for safety. The staff member is in close proximity to the student and may/or may not maintain contact with the transfer belt.

Minimal to Moderate Assistance: The student is partial weight bearing and will require some support to assist in safely transferring.

Maximal Assistance (dependent): A student requiring maximal assistance is unable to safely support themselves through arms and legs for a transfer.

Types of Assisted Transfers or Lifts*

One-Person Transfer: A transfer safely completed by a student who is partial weight bearing with the support of one trained adult. The student participates as much as possible and is fitted with a transfer belt. Some transfers may require additional equipment as identified by designated staff.

Two-Person Transfer: A transfer safely completed by two trained adults with the student assisting with weight bearing as able. The student is fitted with a transfer belt. Some transfers may require additional equipment as identified by designated staff.

One-Person Lift: A student transfer is completed safely with one trained adult based on the weight and physical needs of the student. The student is not weight bearing.

Two-Person Lift: A student transfer is completed safely with two trained adults. The student is not weight bearing.

Mechanical Lift: A student transfer is safely completed using a mechanical lift and sling by two trained adults. The student is not weight bearing with their arms or legs.

*The type of transfer or lift that is most appropriate for a student and supporting staff will be determined on assessment by a designated OT or PT.

Related Equipment

Mechanical Lift: A student is assisted to move safely from one surface to another using portable manual lifts, battery-operated lifts, ceiling lifts or stand assist lifts, and a properly fitted sling. Mechanical lifts are performed by two trained staff members.

Transfer or Gait Belt: This is a specially designed belt that is snugly fitted around the student's waist and held by staff to provide physical support for mobility. It is an important piece of equipment for student and staff safety.

Gait, Positioning and Care Equipment: These are the items the student is being transferred to/from including walkers, wheelchairs, supported seating, commodes, etc. Trained staff are required to be familiar with the equipment the student is being transferred to and from.

Procedures

1. The following are the fundamental principles upon which this procedure is based:
 - 1.1. Every student has the right to move freely and safely,
 - 1.2. Every student has the right to be valued as an individual,
 - 1.3. Every student has the right to be treated with dignity and respect,

- 1.4. Every student has the right to be involved and consulted on their own mobility supports to the best of their ability,
 - 1.5. Every student has the right to express their views on their mobility supports and have such views considered,
 - 1.6. Every student has a right to mobility support that is as consistent as possible.
2. Independent Mobility
 - 2.1. PRSD acknowledges that the level of mobility supports a student regularly requires at school may change over time. Some students will require ongoing and increasing levels of mobility support. PRSD supports the reduction of mobility supports to increase the safety of students and staff wherever possible.
 - 2.2. Students will be given opportunities to participate as much as reasonably possible in the lift, transfer, and/or ambulation. Mobility support will be provided at a pace that is comfortable for the student. If the student refuses to participate in mobility, then staff will collaborate with parents, designated professionals (OT and/or PT), and the student to the best of their ability to revise the mobility plan.

3. Guidelines for Assisted Transfers

Individual and environmental factors inform the decision of the most appropriate mobility supports for a student and the supporting staff. These factors include, but are not limited to, medical conditions (e.g., vision, hearing, bone density, medications, etc.), age, physical characteristics (e.g., weight bearing status, strength, muscle tone, endurance, fatigue), condition (e.g., ability to follow simple commands), state of regulation and willingness to comply, fatigue, and communication skills. Based on the above information and the general guidelines that follow, the designated OT and/or PT will determine the appropriate mobility supports for each student.

- 3.1. Students who weight less than 15.9kg (35 pounds) may require a 1-person transfer.
- 3.2. Students who weigh between 15.9 to 22.7kg (35 to 50 pounds) may require a 2-person transfer.
- 3.3. When students weight more than 22.7kg (50 pounds) and an OT and/or PT has determined they require moderate-maximum assistance then they may require a mechanical lift by 2 people.

There are additional factors that impact assisted transfers in addition to the student specific characteristics described above. These factors include but are not limited to physical space, student-staff biometrics, the total number/frequency of transfers.

4. This administrative procedure applies to students who require regular, ongoing mobility supports and the staff that provide these supports. It is not intended to address the needs of students who are required to temporarily use mobility equipment like crutches or a

wheelchair due to a short-term impairment (such as an accident). The school staff, principal or designated staff will collaborate with parents and the student to their maximal ability to ensure the needs of these students are met.

5. Documentation

Students who require regular mobility support will have a written Mobility Supports Plan co-created by staff with parental involvement and must be informed by OT and/or PT that states the type of mobility support required, and necessary equipment. The plan will be uploaded into the student's Digital Student Record and must be reviewed and revised when there is a change in student functioning. At minimum, the plan is to be reviewed annually with the parents, staff involved and the principal or designate.

6. Involved staff are to be aware of the administrative procedure.

7. Training

7.1. All staff who consistently provide mobility supports or may be required to support will complete annual required training.

7.1.1. Specified online training as required.

7.1.2. Annual, practical (hands-on) lift and transfer training provided by the designated OT and/or PT.

7.1.3. Student specific training as required.

7.2. Every student will have the opportunity to have consistent mobility support provided by trained staff with at least one trained staff who works consistently with the student. Schools should have 2-3 people trained to provide mobility support for each student identified with a Mobility Plan in the event of staff absence or other staffing changes.

7.3. Additional staff members who have received annual training may assist in providing mobility support with direct support from trained staff members who work consistently with the student on a weekly basis.

7.4. Should no trained staff members be available to provide mobility:

7.4.1. Due to a short-term staff absence then an accommodation plan may be implemented.

7.4.2. Due to a long-term staff change, then in consultation with the Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist, it will be determined if additional training is required.

8. Basic Procedure – Key Principles of Body Mechanics for Staff

8.1. Wear proper footwear and clothing.

8.2. Plan the move.

8.3. Bring the student close to the transfer surface.

- 8.4. Stand with feet apart, knees slightly flexed, head & trunk upright and in midline.
 - 8.5. Get close to the student.
 - 8.6. Tighten stomach and buttock muscles.
 - 8.7. Tuck chin and keep spine in a neutral position.
 - 8.8. Lift with legs and move feet in the direction of the movement. Shift feet and take small steps or pivot to move your body. Avoid rotating or twisting the spine.
 - 8.9. Carry weight as close to your center of gravity as possible.
 - 8.10. If completing a lift of transfer with another person, communicate and coordinate movements.
9. Basic Procedure – Lift and Transfer (See Appendix A - Lifting Students Properly)
- 9.1. Complete environmental scan and remove hazards.
 - 9.2. Inspect transfer and lift equipment to ensure it is in working order.
 - 9.3. Prepare for the transfer by proactively setting up materials as needed and by having the number of staff required available before starting.
 - 9.4. Minimize distance between the transfer surfaces. Adjust height of transfer surfaces as needed.
 - 9.5. Prepare the student's mobility equipment for the transfer/lift if applicable (e.g., apply brakes, swinging away/remove footrests, etc.). The last step before the transfer/lift will be to remove the seatbelt.
 - 9.6. Prepare the student for the transfer/lift. Ensure the student understands their role.
 - 9.7. Staff will prepare themselves for the transfer and use good body mechanics.
 - 9.8. Complete the transfer or lift in a controlled manner according to the student's mobility plan. The student should participate using their maximal ability.
 - 9.9. Assist the student with positioning on the transfer surface as needed. Fasten the seatbelt when the transfer surface is equipped.
10. Basic Procedure – Ambulation (See Appendix A - Lifting Students Properly)
- 10.1. Complete environmental scan and remove hazards.
 - 10.2. Inspect any transfer and mobility equipment to ensure it is in working order.
 - 10.3. Prepare for ambulation by proactively setting up materials as needed and by having the number of staff required available before starting.
 - 10.4. Prepare the student's equipment for ambulation if applicable (e.g., apply wheelchair brakes, swinging away/remove footrests, etc.).
 - 10.5. Prepare the student by ensuring they understand their role by securely fitting the gait belt around the student's waist (between bottom rib cage and the top of the pelvis).

- 10.6. Staff will prepare themselves for any transfer and subsequent ambulation and use good body mechanics.
- 10.7. Support the student move from sitting to standing out of mobility equipment as applicable following Lift and Transfer procedures and Mobility Plan.
- 10.8. Once the student is balanced in standing, begin ambulation.
 - 10.8.1. Use the gait belt to control movement of the student's center of mass. If the student loses their balance:
 - 10.8.2. Use the gait belt to direct the student's center of mass back over their base of support.
 - 10.8.3. If you need to give more help with maintaining balance, use one hand on the shoulder (not the arm or clothing) as well as on the gait belt.
- 10.9. When the student uses a walker or other gait equipment then:
 - 10.9.1. Transfer student into/out of mobility equipment as applicable following Lift and Transfer procedures and Mobility Plan.
 - 10.9.2. Secure any mobility equipment as applicable (e.g., straps, swing away arms, etc.).
 - 10.9.3. Staff will continue to provide the necessary support as outlined in the Mobility Plan throughout the ambulation.
 - 10.9.4. The student will participate in the transfer and ambulation to their maximal ability.

11. Equipment

- 11.1. The division is responsible for providing transfer belts.
- 11.2. The division is responsible for providing equipment for mechanical lifts as is required.
- 11.3. All schools with elevators and stairs will have emergency evacuation plans available.

12. Safety

- 12.1. Be familiar with how to safely operate equipment before using.
- 12.2. Inspect equipment integrity (e.g., seams, fabric, fasteners like buckles or Velcro).
- 12.3. Inspect equipment to ensure it is in working order (e.g., brakes, battery).
- 12.4. Defective and unsafe equipment (i.e., fraying seams, broken fasteners) that is not in working order must be taken out of service.
- 12.5. Complete environmental scan to ensure the floor is dry and clear of unneeded materials.
- 12.6. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintaining, including charging battery operated, equipment.

12.7. Hygiene slings will be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's instructions before use with another student.

13. Parent's Responsibilities

Parents agree to inform school staff when there is a change in the student's condition (e.g., weight bearing status, behaviour, health, etc.) or physical growth (e.g., weight change, fitting of braces) that may impact the student's ability to participate in mobility as they have had before.

Parents agree to make the student's personal mobility equipment available as needed (e.g., Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFOs), footwear, wheelchair, walkers, etc.).

14. Staff Responsibilities

14.1. To be familiar with the division administrative procedure.

14.2. Complete and participate in annual training.

14.3. Ensure there are familiar, trained staff to regularly provide consistent mobility support.

14.4. Train additional staff to ensure trained staff are available to provide mobility support.

14.5. Be familiar with the student's mobility plan and provide mobile support in a consistent manner to preserve student dignity and safety.

14.6. Agree to provide mobility support to the student should they require them.

14.7. Inform the parents if the student is noted to have any marks or skin changes from personal equipment (e.g., shoes, AFOs) or other reason. Staff will complete the required documentation.

14.8. In the event a student sustains a potential injury while providing mobility support then staff will complete the Student Accident Report and the designated staff member will inform the parents.

14.9. In the event a staff member sustains a musculoskeletal injury (MSI) while providing mobility support, then the staff member will follow procedures for incident reporting.

15. Student Responsibilities

15.1. The student should be encouraged to participate in and direct the mobility supports as appropriate and to the best of their ability.

Adopted/Revised/Reviewed: SEP 2024

Reference: Section 11, 33, 197 Education Act
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
Section 23 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Emergency Medical Aid Act

Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines
Work Safe Alberta. (n.d.). *No Unsafe Lift*. Retrieved May 4, 2012, from Government of Alberta
Human Services: Employment and Immigration
https://employment.alberta.ca/documents/Whs/WHS-PUB_nounsafelift_workbook.pdf