



NEW MEXICO
DIRECT CAREGIVERS
COALITION



Health and Safety for Caregivers

MODULES

- Infection Prevention
- Musculoskeletal Safety
- Workers' Rights and Responsibilities

This **Participant Handbook** was created by the New Mexico Direct Caregivers Coalition (NMDCC) and is designed for New Mexico caregivers (Personal Care Assistants, Home Health Aides and Homemakers). The curriculum is also appropriate for Direct Support staff, Community Health Workers, Community Health Representatives and allied services like kitchen and custodial staff.

The Handbook and educational slides are meant to be used as a package, delivered in person by NMDCC-certified Master Trainers.

New Mexico Direct Caregivers Coalition is grateful to numerous individuals, organizations and advocates who have been helpful in creating this curriculum. First, these materials would not have been possible without Amber Gallup Rodriguez, curriculum specialist, and Sam Tung, illustrator.

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Finally, caregivers, direct support staff and their managers and supervisors from the following organizations deserve mention because they have informed this curriculum and are the reason we conduct the work we do:

Employees and contracted staff of agencies serving those with disabilities:

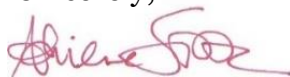
- A Better Way of Living
- Cerebral Palsy Support Group of University of New Mexico
- ENMRSH, Inc.
- Independent Living Resource Center
- Self-Directed Choices, LLC
- Mandy's Farm
- Mi Via Waiver Providers
- San Juan Center for Independence
- Tobosa
- Tresco
- United Healthcare Community Plan
- Numerous consumers and care recipients
- Numerous individual direct support staff, family members and jobseekers

Employees and contracted staff of agencies serving those who are Elderly (senior centers, home health, assisted living and community settings)

- ABQ-GED
- Ambercare
- At-Home Personal Care Services
- Community Health Representatives (CHRs) of the following pueblos:
 - Isleta
 - Jemez
 - Pojoaque
 - Sandia
 - San Felipe
 - Santa Clara
 - Santo Domingo
 - Taos
- Enchantment Legacy
- Jicarilla Apache
- Navajo Nation providers
- Soaring Eagles Home Care
- United Healthcare Community Plan
- Numerous consumers and care recipients
- Numerous individual caregivers, Community Health Workers, unpaid family caregivers and jobseekers

We encourage readers to send comments and suggestions for improvement to info@nmdcc.org.

Sincerely,



Adrienne R. Smith, MPA
President and CEO

HANDOUT 1 • Key Terms

These are some of the most important terms used in this training.

Bloodborne Infection	Dangerous illness that spreads through contact with blood and body fluids Example: HIV is a <i>bloodborne infection</i> that you can get from a needlestick injury.
Confidential	Private Example: OSHA will keep your complaint <i>confidential</i> .
Consumer, care recipient, loved one and/or participant	Person for whom a caregiver cares (All will be referred to as <i>consumer</i> in this training.) Example: The <i>consumer</i> is cared for by a family caregiver.
File a complaint	Report health and safety concerns to OSHA Example: If you believe your workplace is unsafe, <i>file a complaint</i> with OSHA as soon as possible.
Hazard	Danger, risk Example: Direct caregivers can face health and safety <i>hazards</i> in the consumer's home.
Infection	A condition or illness that results from pathogens that enter the body Example: Hepatitis B is a dangerous bloodborne <i>infection</i> .
Injury	The result of being hurt or harmed Example: Slips, trips and falls can lead to serious <i>injury</i> for direct caregivers.
Musculoskeletal disorder	Condition or injury that affects the muscles, bones or joints Example: Back and shoulder pain are common musculoskeletal disorders for caregivers.
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Part of the United States Department of Labor Example: Since 1970, <i>OSHA</i> has protected workers' health and safety.
Pathogen	A germ that can make you sick Example: Infections happen when pathogens enter your body and multiply.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Gear like clothing, helmets, goggles, gloves or other garments designed to protect the wearer's body from injury or infection Example: You need to ask for PPE required to do your job safely.
Retaliation	Punishing employees for doing anything they have a right to do. Example: You have a right to file a complaint without fear of <i>retaliation</i> .
Universal (or Standard) Precautions	A set of important infection control practices to use when caring for every consumer Example: Handwashing is an important part of <i>Standard Precautions</i> .

HANDOUT 2 • How Infection Happens

An infection is a condition or sickness. Infections are caused by tiny germs – called **pathogens** – that make people sick. Most pathogens you are exposed to while caregiving are bacteria or viruses.

Pathogens can be moved from one person to another, spreading disease. This is called transmission of infection. Transmission can happen in the following ways:

- Breathing in tiny droplets from someone's coughs, sneezing or talking
- Getting stuck by an infected sharp (needle or syringe)
- Touching people who are infected
- Touching surfaces – such as a chair, bed rail, clothing, bedding – that are infected
- Eating, drinking or touching infected food and water

Direct caregivers can be exposed to many infections:

- *Cold and influenza*
- *Respiratory infections*
- *Diarrhea (such as from the parasite Giardia)*
- *Staph infections (like MRSA)*
 - *Pneumonia*
 - *HIV/AIDS*
 - *Hepatitis B (HBV) and C (HBC)*
 - *Tuberculosis*

This is the **Chain of Infection**. It shows how infections happen:

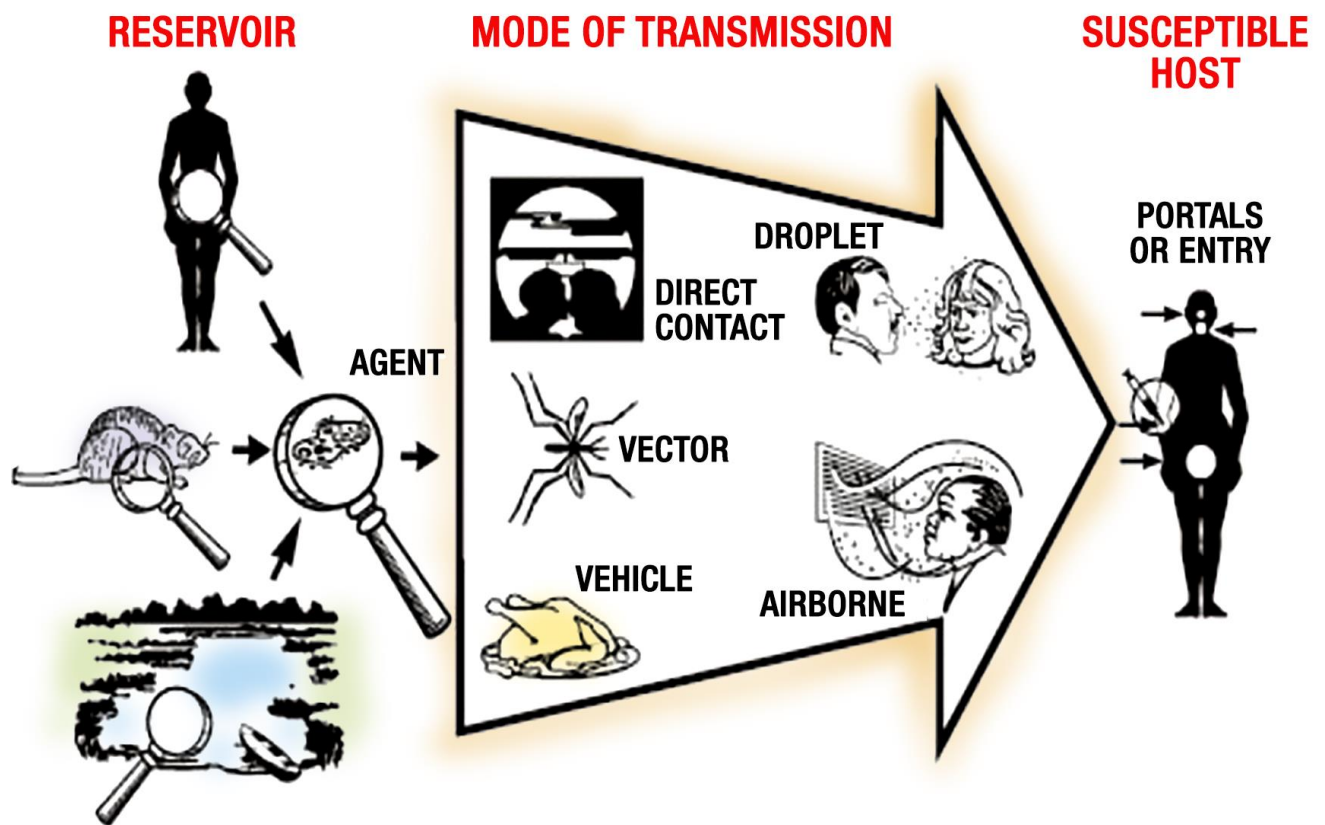


Figure 1. The Cycle of Infection

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1992). *Principles of epidemiology, 2nd ed.* Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A **reservoir** is the source of the pathogen. It can be a human, an animal or the environment.

The **susceptible host** is the new person who gets infected.

The **mode of transmission** is the way the pathogen gets from the reservoir to susceptible host.

Example:

Mr. Lujan (reservoir) coughed (mode of transmission) on Monica (susceptible host).

HANDOUT 3 • Standard Precautions

Standard Precautions are a set of practices that can prevent or minimize the spread of infection – **especially bloodborne** infection. They have to do with cleaning, the use of protective equipment and other precautions. Standards precautions should be used every time you care for a consumer, and especially when there is any chance you might come into contact with body fluids.

Body fluids include:

- Blood
- Sores or broken skin
- Mucous (phlegm)
- Pus
- Saliva
- Sweat
- Feces (poop or diarrhea)
- Urine (pee)
- Vomit
- Semen
- Vaginal fluid
- Tears



Figure 2. Handwashing is an easy and effective way to prevent the spread of infection.

Handwashing

Handwashing is an easy and effective way to prevent the spread of infection.

Always wash your hands:

- Immediately when you arrive at the consumer's home.
- Before you leave the consumer's home.
- Immediately if you accidentally touch blood or any other bodily fluid.
- Before and after contact with a consumer.
- Before and after use of gloves.
- After handling soiled linens or waste.
- Before and after contact with any wounds.
- After using the restroom.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you always follow all of these handwashing rules? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think you need to wash your hands before you leave the home?

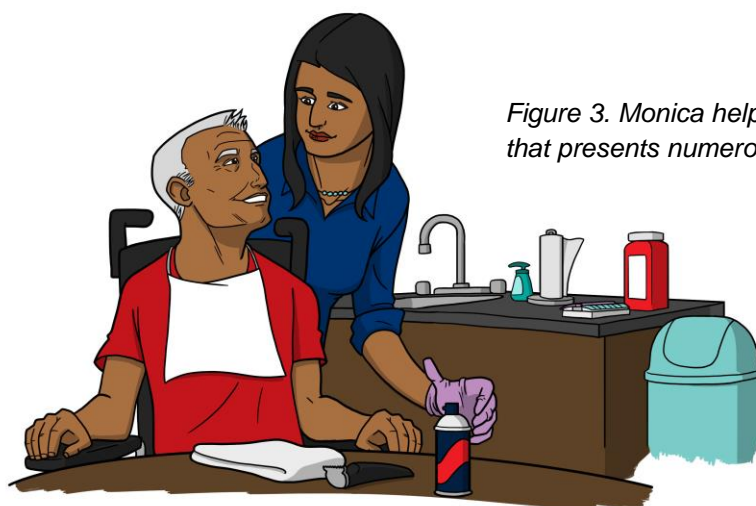


Figure 3. Monica helps Mr. Lujan shave, an activity that presents numerous opportunities for infection.



Figure 4. Caregiver puts on gloves.

Gloves and Other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (PPE), like disposable gloves, allows you to create a barrier between yourself and germs. By using disposable gloves, you are preventing the spread of infectious diseases like the common cold, the flu, MRSA or HIV, just to name a few. Wearing gloves is not just for your protection but the protection of others as well. Your employer should provide you the PPE you need for keeping yourself safe.

Always wear gloves anytime you touch the consumer.

Always wear gloves in the following situations:

- Touching blood and body fluids, mucous membranes (such as the nose and mouth), sores or broken skin
- Touching items (such as dirty towels) or surfaces (such as bed rails or toilets) that are dirty with blood or body fluids
- Touching the consumer or care recipient
- Anytime there is a chance of contact with feces (poop or diarrhea), urine (pee), vomit (throw-up) or wound drainage (pus)
- Touching used or dirty clothing or linens
- Cleaning the bathroom

More Tips for Using Gloves:

- Gloves should be changed after every contact with every consumer.
- Wash your hands before you put on gloves and immediately after you remove your gloves.
- Never wash or re-use gloves.
- Never use gloves that are ripped or dirty.
- Gloves must fit properly. If they are too big or too small, you need new or different gloves.

Discussion Questions:

- 1.** Why do you think you need to wear gloves every time you touch a consumer?
- 2.** Do you always follow all of these rules about gloves? Why or why not?

Proper Storage, Use, and Disposal of Sharps

As a direct caregiver, you do not give injections to the consumer. But you may find used needles (sharps or syringes) in the consumer's home. You may find them in the trash or even in the bed. Sharps are very dangerous – they can and will spread serious bloodborne infections.

Use these Standard Precautions in the consumer's home:

- Never re-cap a needle or touch the point.
- Do not break needles.
- Never reach into the trash can or other places where sharps might be.
- Place contaminated sharps and their caps in a sharps container or a can with a slit on the top. Make sure the container says SHARPS. Tell the consumer to always put sharps in that container.
- Dispose of the sharps container at a hospital or pharmacy - NEVER in the garbage or recycle bin.

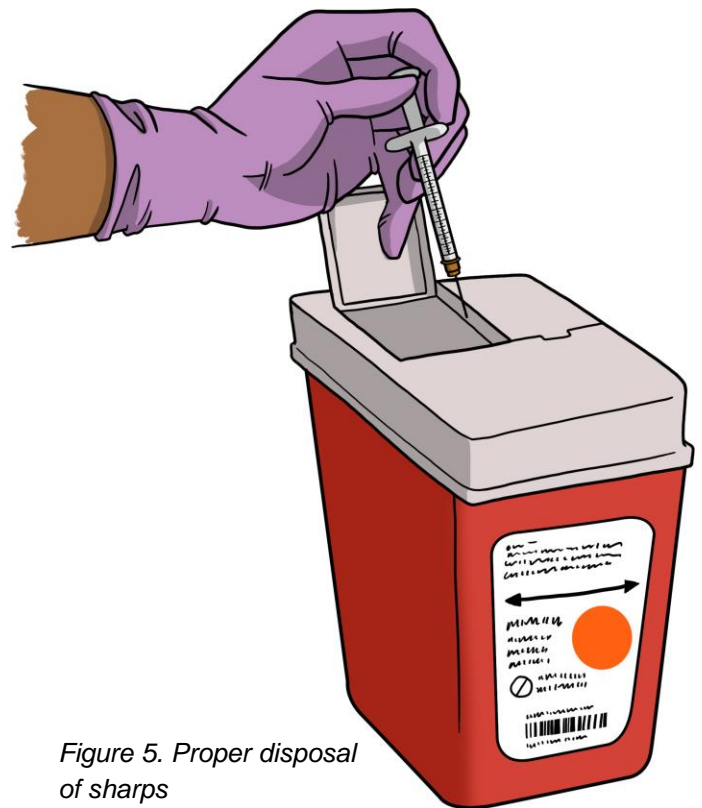


Figure 5. Proper disposal of sharps

Discussion Questions:

1. Why shouldn't you break or re-cap needles?
2. If the consumer you care for uses sharps, what do you do to make sure you don't get an injury?

Experts believe that there are up to 800,000 sharps injuries every year in U.S. healthcare

Source: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2010).

Keep the Environment Clean

- Wash dirty linen (clothes, sheets and towels) as soon as possible.
- Use gloves and heavy duty bags with laundry. Tie laundry bags shut. Make sure they don't leak.
- Flush urine and mop water down the toilet. Do not dump it in the sink.
- Put dirty incontinence pads or disposable gloves in plastic bags. Tie the bags and take out to the trash immediately.
- Wash hands before and after handling, preparing or eating food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Cover nose and mouth with your elbow (not hand) when coughing and sneezing.
- Germs multiply rapidly in warm, dark, moist environments so keep those areas on a person's body and in living areas clean.
- Clean surface with disinfecting solution regularly. Be sure to clean surfaces after contamination.
- Cover any wounds of your client or yourself with band aides to eliminate spread of infection.



Figure 6. Caregiver safely ties garbage bag before disposing. Something is missing in this illustration. What is it?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you follow all of these rules on your job? Why or why not?
2. Germs multiply in warm, dark, moist (wet) places. What are these places on the human body? What are these places in the home?

**You likely do not know the infections a consumer has.
To stay safe, use all Standard Precautions at all times.**

HANDOUT 4 • Monica's Precautions

Instructions: Read the scenario. Work with your group to answer the questions. Remember, everyone in the group is an “expert” on one type of Standard Precautions.

Monica cares for Mr. Lujan in his home. Mr. Lujan is 70 years old. He has mild dementia and diabetes. Monica spends most of the day at his house. She does Mr. Lujan's laundry, takes out the trash, helps him shower and use the bathroom, and cooks his meals. He has a few diabetes wounds on his leg, so she keeps those clean and dressed.

Monica does not have to give Mr. Lujan his insulin injections; his son does that. But his son sometimes throws the needles into the trash, not in a Sharps container.

Monica thinks Mr. Lujan might also have Hepatitis or HIV, but she doesn't know for sure. She knows Mr. Lujan takes antiviral drugs.



1. What precautions should Monica take to avoid infection?

- When she's doing laundry?
- When she's taking out the trash?
- When she's dressing his wounds?
- What other precautions should she take at all times?

2. What else Monica can do to improve her safety on this job?

Figure 7. Monica, Mr. Lujan's caregiver, must stay aware and protect herself from infection.



----- CUT AND PASTE WHERE YOU WORK! -----



HANDOUT 5 • Universal Cleaning and Disinfecting Solution:

Mix up this easy cleaning solution for infection control:

Dilute bleach (or apple cider vinegar) 1:10. That means that the solution is 1 part bleach (or vinegar) and 10 parts water. A “part” is any measurement you choose.

For example, you may choose a ¼ cup (quarter cup) measure. Just mix ¼ cup of bleach with 2 ½ cups (that’s 10 quarter-cups) of water. Put the solution

- 1.** Spray the solution onto the surface you want to clean. Wait just until the surface air dries and then wipe it up with a damp cloth.
- 2.** Don't make too much: a fresh supply should be made every 24 hours.
- 3.** Remember that fragile skin can be very sensitive to bleach and water solution. If a care recipient gets the solution on his/her skin, rinse the area with water.

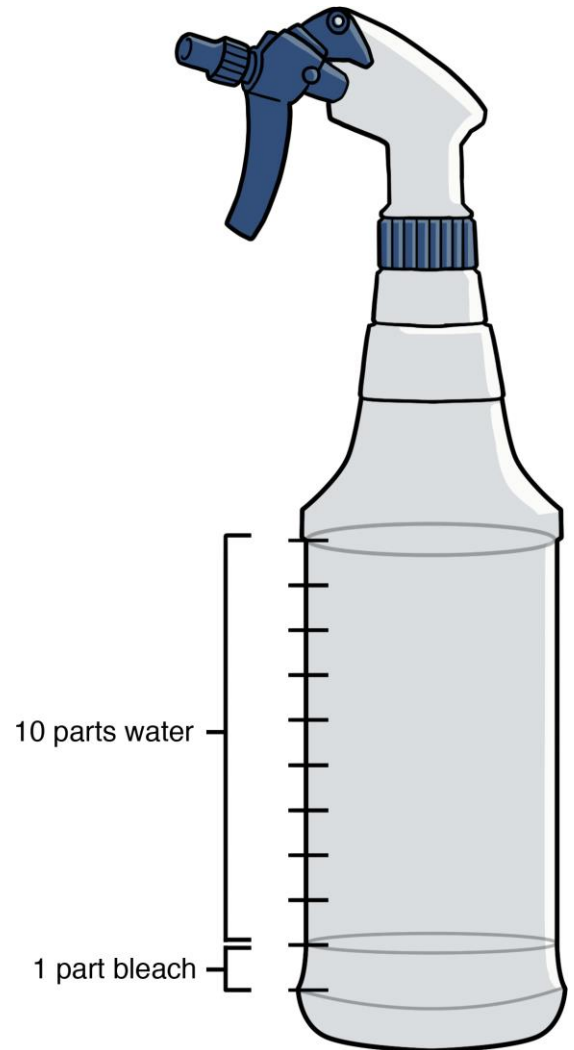


Figure 8. Universal cleaning and disinfecting solution

HANDOUT 6 • Proper Handwashing and Glove Use

Procedure: HANDWASHING

1. Take off jewelry on hands and wrists. (Try not to wear jewelry while caregiving!)
2. Turn on **warm** (not hot!) water.
3. Wet your hands under running water. Point your fingertips down.
4. Apply soap to hands (liquid soap in a pump is best).
5. With fingertips pointing down, lather hands well. Rub your hands together in a circular motion. Wash carefully between fingers, under nails and up wrists.
6. **Remember:** You need to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. (Sing “Happy Birthday” twice to yourself, so you know how long 20 seconds is.)
7. Rinse off all the soap. Again, make sure your fingertips are pointed down.
8. Dry hands with a clean paper towel.
9. Use paper towel to turn off the water and to open the bathroom door.
10. Drop the wet paper towel into the trash.

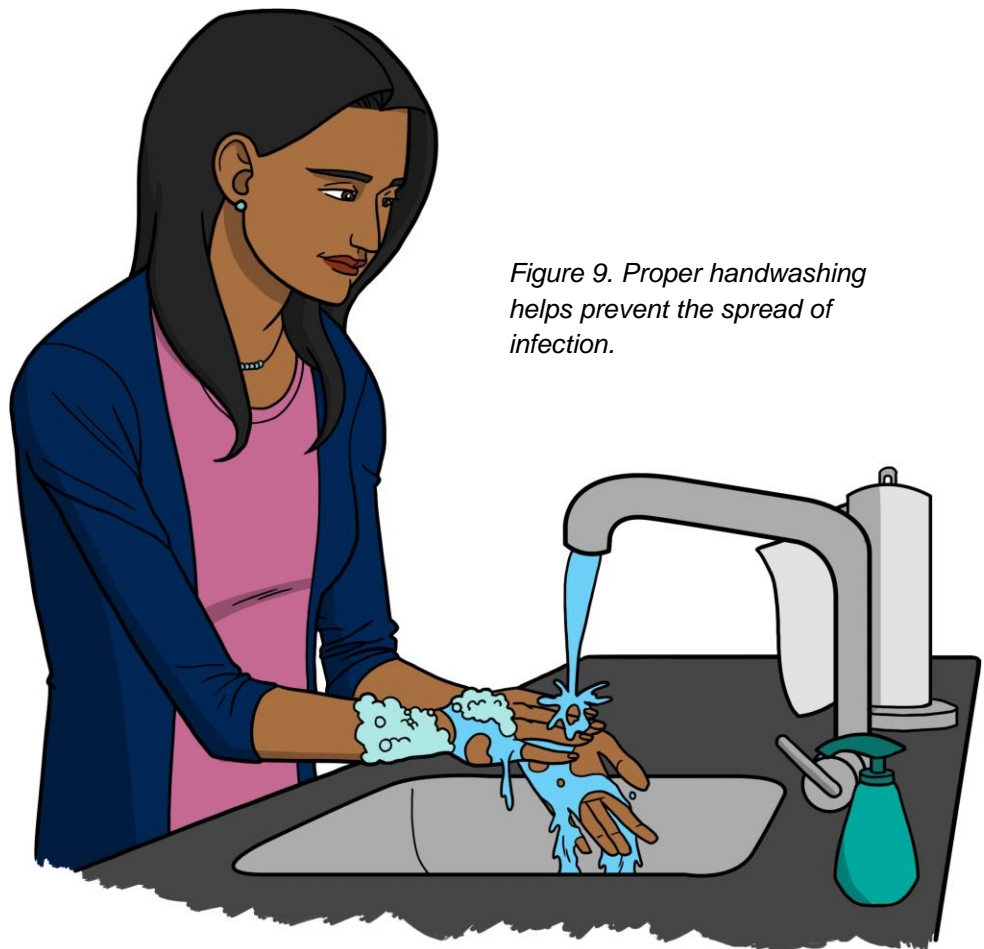


Figure 9. Proper handwashing helps prevent the spread of infection.

Procedure: USING GLOVES

Putting On Gloves:

1. Wash and dry your hands carefully.
2. Get a new pair of gloves from the box.
3. Pull gloves on carefully. If a glove tears or gets a hole, take it off and start again with a new glove.
4. Interlace fingers to remove wrinkles, air pockets and achieve a comfortable fit.
5. If the gloves might get very dirty, wear two pairs of gloves.

Removing and Throwing Away Gloves:

1. Pinch one of the rubber gloves just below the cuff using your opposite thumb and index finger.
2. Lift glove away from wrist area.
3. Pull off the glove, turning inside out. Ball that glove tightly into the palm of your gloved hand.
4. With ungloved hand, slide your index and middle fingers underneath the cuff of the other (infected) glove.
5. Pull off that second glove inside out. The first glove you removed should now be inside the second glove.
6. Throw the gloves away and wash your hands.



Figure 10. Always use the proper procedure to put on, remove, and throw away gloves.

HANDOUT 7 • Musculoskeletal Safety

What is a musculoskeletal disorder and why do direct caregivers get them?

Musculoskeletal disorders are injuries of the muscles, bones, and joints. Most healthcare workers have physically demanding jobs, but direct caregivers often do this difficult work without help, by themselves in the consumer's home.

Direct caregivers very often have to:

- Lift and move consumers without help
- Twist and pivot the body while carrying a load
- Stand for long periods of time
- Reach for things, getting off balance
- Work in places that may be cluttered or otherwise hazardous

For these reasons, direct caregivers have more job-related injuries than many other workers.

They have high rates of injuries related to:

- The back, shoulder and neck
- Slips, trips and falls
- Overexertion (working too hard or too long)
- Forceful or frequent lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, carrying and throwing
- Repetitive activities

Symptoms and Consequences

Symptoms of musculoskeletal disorders include:

- Pain
- Stiffness
- Tingling
- Numbness
- Swelling

In addition to these difficult physical symptoms, other consequences include:

- Lost work time
- Lost pay
- Consumers lose consistency and quality of care because caregiver cannot work

Interesting note: Studies have shown that the health and safety of the direct caregiver is linked to the health and safety of the consumer. In other words, a safer and healthier caregiver means a safer and healthier consumer and the agency saves the costs associated with worker injury. In a safe homecare environment, everybody wins!

Sources: Kim, Geiger-Bropwn, Trankff, Bonet (2010); National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2014)

Avoiding Musculoskeletal Injury

Musculoskeletal injuries are very common in direct caregiving, but you can do a lot to avoid them and keep yourself safe. We recommend these strategies:

- Use assistive devices such as gait belts to move or transfer consumers.
- Encourage consumer to ask others to install assistive devices for activities of daily living (ADLs), such as shower chairs, raised toilet seats and grab bars.
- Keep the floors clean and dry.
- Remove clutter and obstacles in the home (with the consumer's permission).
- Wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Make sure there is adequate lighting inside and outside the home, if possible.
- Secure loose cords in the house – they are a tripping hazard!
- Be sure ice and snow has been removed from walkways.
- Raise your awareness of fall hazards: Make it a habit to look for them inside and outside the home.
- Lift items and stand with proper posture.

Source: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2014).

HANDOUT 8 • Health and Safety Concerns

Scenario: A Fire Hazard

Instructions: Read the scenario below. Think about how you would respond in this situation. Then, discuss the questions below with your group.

Scenario:

You are a caregiver in the home of Mrs. Chavez, a 68-year-old woman with lung disease. Mrs. Chavez has been a smoker all of her life. She now uses portable medical oxygen in her home. You know that it is very dangerous to smoke while using oxygen. It can cause burns or a fire in the home. Even when the tank is turned off, there is a fire hazard.

You asked Mrs. Chavez not to smoke. You explained the danger, but she continues to smoke. You also talked to your supervisor about the problem, but he doesn't think he can make Mrs. Chavez stop smoking. After all, she is in her own home.

- 1.** What would you do in this situation? Why?

- 2.** Mrs. Chavez is correct: She is in her own home and has a right to smoke. What are your rights in this situation?

HANDOUT 9 • Your Rights and Responsibilities

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was created in 1970. It is a part of the U.S. Department of Labor. OSHA's mission is to reduce the hazards in your job, and to make sure you have a safe and healthy workplace. OSHA sets and enforces standards. It also provides training, outreach, education and assistance to workers and employers.

As a direct caregiver, you have the right to a safe and healthy workplace – even if you work in someone else's home! If you are worried about your safety or health on the job, you have a right to speak up without fear of retaliation. Retaliation is when an employer punishes an employee for speaking up or doing anything else that he or she has the right to do at work.

You also have the right to:

- Receive training in a language you understand.
- Work on machines that are safe.
- Have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as gloves.
- Be protected from toxic chemicals.
- Participate in an OSHA inspection of your workplace.
- Report an injury or illness, and get copies of your medical records.
- See copies of your agency's work-related injury and illness log.

Your employer has the responsibility to make sure you can exercise these rights, without fear that you will lose pay or lose your job.

1. What is OSHA's mission?
2. What is an example of retaliation?
3. What are two rights that are important to *you*, on your job?

HANDOUT 10 • When and How to File a Complaint with OSHA

Filing a Health and Safety Complaint

If you believe your working conditions are unsafe, tell your employer. You have the right to complain – even if you are not sure the hazards violate OSHA standards.

If you feel your situation is not being resolved, you may also file a complaint with OSHA and ask for an inspection. This is your right under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) of 1970.

If you choose to file a complaint, make sure you file your complaint **as soon as possible** after noticing the hazard. If the violations happened longer than 6 months ago, OSHA may not be able to help you.

OSHA takes your complaints seriously and **will keep all complaints confidential**. You can file a health and safety complaint by mail, by telephone, or online:

In Writing

Write your complaint on the OSHA Complaint Form. It is available at www.osha.gov/oshforms/osh7.pdf. Include your name, address, and telephone number so that OSHA can contact you about your complaint. Mail your Complaint Form to the following address:

Santa Fe State Plan Office, OSHA
525 Camino de los Marquez, Suite 3
Santa Fe, NM 87502

By Telephone

OSHA staff can discuss your complaint and answer your questions. **If there is an emergency, use the telephone** – not the mail or the internet. To contact OSHA in New Mexico, call (505) 476-8700. You can also call 1-800-321-OSHA.

Online

You can file your complaint online using the OSHA Online Complaint Form. You can find this form at <https://www.osha.gov/pls/osh7/eComplaintForm.html>

Filing a Whistleblower Complaint

It is illegal for an employer to fire, demote, transfer, or otherwise retaliate against you for using your rights under the law. If you believe your employer has retaliated against you, you can file a whistleblower complaint **within 30 days of the retaliation**.

You can file your whistleblower complaint by mail, by telephone, or online:

In Writing

Describe your complaint in writing using the OSHA Notice of Whistleblower Complaint Form. You can find this form online at

https://www.whistleblowers.gov/whistleblower_complaint.pdf. You can write your complaint in any language. Send it to the following address:

Santa Fe State Plan Office, OSHA
525 Camino de los Marquez, Suite 3
Santa Fe, NM 87502

By Telephone

Call your local OSHA Regional Office at (505) 476-8700.

Online

Use the OSHA Online Whistleblower Complaint Form. You can find it at

<https://www.osha.gov/whistleblower/WBComplaint.html>

**For more information about filing complaints with OSHA, visit
www.osha.gov/workers/index.html**

Resources

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New Mexico Direct Caregivers Coalition advocates for direct care workers' education, training, benefits, wages and professional development so they may better serve people who are elderly and those with disabilities.