

DME/AT ASSESSMENT GUIDE

1. Is the consumer in a geriatric wheelchair? YES NO

Geriatric wheelchairs (“Geri Chairs”) are considered by many advocates to be a form of restraint. Not only is the occupant prevented from moving about the facility independently, s/he is prevented from leaving the facility. Geriatric chairs cannot be transported in any public transportation and do not fold to be transported in a private car. Often the occupant of a geriatric chair slides down and is then placed in a reclining position as a further form of restraint. Geriatric chairs offer no lateral support, and a large tray is strapped across the front of the chair and cannot be independently removed.

2. Is the consumer restrained using a posey restraint between the legs? YES NO

Posey restraints between the legs are a common situation in nursing facilities. There is a misconception that this will prevent the wearer from sliding out of the wheelchair. In actuality, it places pressure on the groin and pubic area, causing irritation and, in some cases, nerve and tissue damage.

3. Does either arm hang to the side or the lap? YES NO

Often when a person has a Cerebral Vascular Aneurism (CVA), one side of her/his body has little or no movement and sensation. If the arm and leg are not supported, the shoulder can become subluxed and dislocated, causing a great deal of pain. Also, without the arm being supported and in the line of the consumer's vision, the consumer neglects the arm and it may become caught in the wheels of her/his wheelchair or clipped in a doorway

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4. Is either arm purple or cold to the touch? YES NO

This is an indication there is not adequate circulation going to the arm. The arm should be supported and elevated.

5. Does the consumer slide out of the wheelchair? YES NO

If the consumer slides out of the wheelchair, her/his positioning is wrong. S/he needs to have a comprehensive seating evaluation to determine the correct seating position.

6. Does the consumer appear uncomfortable and move around a lot? YES NO

Constantly moving around, often leaning forward or to one side, is an indication that the consumer is uncomfortable and needs some kind of pressure relief. S/he may need a special cushion or a different seat and back.

7. Is the consumer unable to move independently from place to place? YES NO

Historically, nursing facilities have been insensitive to the mobility needs of their residents. They are obligated to provide safe and adequate seating but are not currently defining adequate as providing the optimal level of independence. When a consumer cannot move around the nursing facility independently, s/he is often restricted to one area, sometimes just her/his room. This can also be considered a form of restraint.

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8. Does either foot drag on the ground? ___ YES ___ NO

It is common to see wheelchairs used in nursing facilities that do not have adequate or any footrests. In some instances, this enables the user to propel the wheelchair with her/his feet. If there is not adequate movement in both feet, injury or decubiti can result.

9. Is either foot swollen or requiring elevation? ___ YES ___ NO

Any time there is edema in a lower extremity, it is usually recommended that the leg be elevated. The wheelchair should have an elevating leg rest.

10. Does the consumer have decubiti on the buttocks area? ___ YES ___ NO

If this consumer has decubiti, a pressure relief cushion and mattress should be obtained.

11. Is the consumer sitting in a chair that appears too big or too small? ___ YES ___ NO

Often consumers in nursing facilities are placed in wheelchairs with little consideration given to the width and depth of the chair. A wheelchair that is too deep may impede circulation in the consumer's legs. A wheelchair that is not deep enough does not provide adequate support. A chair that is too narrow can cause decubiti and a chair that is too wide can allow the consumer to slump to one side and increases the difficulty that s/he has in reaching to push the wheelchair around.

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12. Is the consumer sitting on an “egg crate” cushion or other cushion? ___ YES ___ NO

An egg crate cushion offers no pressure relief and only softens the blow, so to speak. A sling seat also adds to leg adduction (moving the legs together), causing the legs to be rotated inward. A solid seat insert with a pressure relief cushion is an acceptable alternative.

13. Does the consumer lean to-one side? ___ YES ___ NO

If so... Does s/he have a curvature of the spine? Does s/he have adequate trunk control? Leaning is an indication that something is wrong with the current seating system.

14. Does the consumer’s head hang forward or to either side? ___ YES ___ NO

Almost every consumer who needs a head rest can be seen with her/his head hanging forward to one side. This is not only uncomfortable, but distorts the consumer’s visual perceptual field and can interfere with her/his active participation in any activity.

15. Is the consumer restricted from being transported by a facility vehicle, public, transportation, or a facility member’s car using her/his current wheelchair? ___ YES ___ NO

Without a mechanism for transportation the consumer is literally incarcerated in the nursing facility. Manual reclining or tilt-in-space wheelchairs can offer more support than geriatric wheelchairs and can also be transported in a van or folded and placed in a car.

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Answering “yes” to any of the questions above may indicate the need for a DME/assistive technology evaluation for seating and mobility.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

___ Ask the consumer if s/he feels DME/AT would be beneficial and why. If the consumer is not interested in obtaining new equipment, the Peer Counselor should find the reason why (e.g., consumer may not know the different types of equipment available). The Peer Counselor should be prepared to provide information about equipment with pictures (e.g., magazines or information from vendors).

___ Ask the consumer if s/he has ever had an equipment evaluation. If yes, attempt to get a copy of the evaluation.

___ Ask the consumer if s/he wants to involve the OT/PT department from the nursing facility in getting the equipment. Explain the benefits of informing the OT/PT department or the nursing facility administrator about the equipment needs.

CONSUMER RECORD

Is an existing evaluation of this consumer’s seating and mobility needs, (consistent with observed condition based on this guide) on file in the nursing facility record?

___ YES ___ NO

Date evaluation was completed: _____

Name/title of the evaluator: _____

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PEER COUNSELING TIPS

- Inform the consumer of her/his rights as a nursing facility resident, especially the right to an evaluation and medical care outside the nursing home.
- Explain the numerous steps and length of time and effort involved in getting equipment to the consumer. Discuss how the nursing facility may not be supportive.
- Thoroughly document all interactions and referrals made in reference to getting equipment.
- Attend Plan of Care meetings to discuss DME/AT needs and the status of the request for equipment. Peer Counselors should support each other by attending Plan of Care meetings in pairs.

DME/AT COMMONLY NEEDED BY CONSUMERS WITH ORC

1. Motorized wheelchairs
2. Manual wheelchairs
3. Adult mobile standers