

## BATHING SAFETY

APRIL 2014

Bathing is a routine activity for which we provide supports daily. What should be a pleasant experience can also pose risks for drowning, falls, and scalding. Continued attentiveness to appropriate bath time preparation, supervision and assistance is necessary to ensure the safety of the people we support. Consider the following:

**ASSESSMENT:** In addition to identifying skills and needs related to actual bathing/washing, individuals should be **evaluated for their needs for staff supervision and assistance and assistive equipment** to ensure that bath time is safe. The assessment should include consideration of:

- Health diagnosis and conditions that may make individuals vulnerable:
  - History of seizures
  - Prescribed drugs that result in drowsiness or sedation
- Mobility limitations
  - History of falling
  - Inability to sit up without assistance
  - Difficulty getting in and out of tubs and shower chairs
- Ability to determine that water temperature is appropriate

**WRITTEN PLANS:** The support team must ensure that the determined supervision and supports are **clearly** identified in written plans used to instruct staff, e.g. IPOPs, ISP and Hab Plan Safeguards, bathing guidelines.

- The level and nature of supervision should be described (e.g. continuous eyes on, within eyesight)
- If the person needs periodic checks, clear instruction of the frequency and time frames for the checks
- Level of assistance with water temperature regulation
- Specific physical support required to get in and out of tub or shower chair
- Description of any adaptive equipment required for bathing and instruction on how the equipment is used

**STAFF TRAINING:** Staff must be trained in their responsibilities during bathing time. This training should include:

- Individualized instruction for each person the staff support. While written plans provide a continued resource for staff, training provides the opportunity for staff to ask questions and the instructor to assess that staff members understand the instruction.
- Water temperature testing prior to introduction of individual into the bath water
- Awareness that swift drowning is a danger presented during bathing and how quickly it can occur
- Communication that for those individuals requiring constant supervision during bath time, this means that the individual should **never, ever** be left unattended, even for staff to run and get a forgotten bathing item like shampoo
- Procedures to ensure all necessary bathing items are in the bathroom before they begin to draw the bath.
- The expectation that staff inform someone, per agency policy of any problems or issues they observe anytime during bathing process. (e.g. their supervisor, clinician, RN, QIDP)

**CONSCIENTIOUS SUPERVISION AND SUPPORTS:** Staff need to be accountable to implement the supports and supervision individuals require, as outlined in the plan. Supervisory and administrative staff should monitor to ensure safe bathing practices are implemented

For more information please see the safe bathing safety alert at: <https://opwdd.ny.gov/>