

NYS Zero Lift Task Force

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Federation*

*Service Employees
International
Union 1199*

*Western New York
Council on Safety
and Health*



2/17/15

To whom it may concern:

The New York State Zero Lift Task Force is made up of health care workers, administrators, patient advocates, union representatives, and safety and health professionals that want to ensure the health and safety of all patients and healthcare workers in New York State. We are writing this letter on behalf of the New York State Zero Lift Task Force to inform you about important developments and requirements in the practice of Safe Patient Handling at your facility.

Safe Patient Handling can be defined as a practice that creates a safe work environment for patients/residents and healthcare workers by eliminating hazardous manual lifting tasks through the implementation of new technologies, such as mechanical lifts and repositioning devices. In addition, a Safe Patient Handling program has been shown to decrease costs related to worker absence, improve worker moral and decrease staff turnover rates.

Individuals who work in healthcare professions suffer more musculoskeletal disorders than in any other occupation nationwide. In 2011, U.S. hospitals recorded 58,860 work-related injuries and illnesses that caused employees to miss work, a rate higher than construction and manufacturing. Nearly half of these injuries (48%) are due to overexertion from manually handling patients. Manual lifting is not only hazardous to caregivers, but also puts patients at risk of falls, fractures, bruises, and skin tears. It is critical that all healthcare facilities implement a Safe Patient Handling to improve quality care for residents and eliminate life-debilitating injuries for workers.

In response to this the New York State Safe Patient Handling Act was passed in April 2014. The Act requires that:

1. By January 1, 2015 the Commissioner of Health must establish a statewide safe patient handling workgroup. The purpose of the is to review programs and policies, consult with organizations, educational institutions and other agencies or individuals

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that may assist in providing information on the development and establishment of safe patient handling programs.

2. On or before January 1, 2016 each healthcare facility covered by the ACT must establish a safe patient handling committee. This committee must include risk management, nursing, purchasing or occupational safety and health. The committee must have two co-chairs, one from management and one frontline worker.

3. On or before January 2017, each healthcare facility must establish a Safe Patient Handling Program. The program must include availability of safe patient handling equipment, a patient handling assessment, initial and annual training for all employees on safe patient handling, and an annual review of the program to determine its effectiveness. Furthermore, the program must include a safe patient handling policy, and a process to identify the effectiveness of the policy based on the patient's physical and medical condition. The facilities included in this bill are all hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic treatment centers and clinics licensed under Article 28 of the Public Health Law. It also includes state operated group homes, healthcare units in prisons, and OCFS facilities.

Members of the NYS Zero Lift Task Force have long been involved in providing educational opportunities for managers and frontline healthcare workers on Safe Patient Handling principles and procedures. The Task Force has provided many statewide Safe Patient Handling conferences and will again offer this unique educational opportunity in October 2015. The focus will be on developing a sustainable Safe Patient Handling program and compliance with the NYS Safe patient Handling Act. For more information on the NYS Zero Lift Task Force or the NYS Safe Patient Handling Act please visit our website at <http://www.zeroliftfornys.org> or the New York State Zero Lift Task Force facebook page.

Members of the Zero Lift Task Force