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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/ DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUPPORTS DIVISION

HEALTH ALERT

Bed Entrapment ALERT!

Benefits of Bedrail Use:

- Aid in turning and repositioning when in bed
- Providing a hand hold for getting in or out of bed
- Providing a sense of comfort and security
- Providing easy access to bed controls and personal care or Assistive Technology items.
- Padding of rails may offer protection during seizures or other involuntary movements

Risks of Bedrail Use:

- Entrapment or death when a person may be caught between the rails or between the bed rails and the mattress
- Injury from falls when the individual climbs or falls over the bedrail
- Bruising cuts or scrapes from bumping against the bedrail.
- Feeling isolated or restricted from others which may lead to agitation
- Risk of using bed rails as a restraint from free movement
- Limiting or preventing individuals who are capable of performing routine activities, such as going to the bathroom, or retrieving a personal item. Limiting movement may result in loss of that functional ability.

What is entrapment? How does it occur?

Entrapment occurs when a person is caught, trapped, entangled or strangled in a bedrail or between a bed rail and mattress or headboard.

Between January 1, 1985 and January 1, 2013, the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) received 901 incidents of patients caught, trapped, entangled, or strangled in hospital beds. The reports included 531 deaths, 151 nonfatal injuries, and 220 cases in which staff intervened to prevent injury. Most of the patients were frail, elderly or confused. New Mexico DDS noted a recent event which has triggered this alert.

Bedrails are often intended to offer protection or assist someone to turn in bed. They may be portable (slide under the mattress) or may be attached to the bed frame as seen in traditional hospital beds. Although bed rails are often suggested for persons with dementia or other intellectual or cognitive issues, these persons may be at increased risk for harm from bedrails due to their confusion, lack of awareness or frailty. Bedrails may be ½, ¾ or full length. Full length rails are typically older and ½ length rails are now more commonly used.

Entrapment occurs when the person's neck, head or chest becomes wedged between the gaps in the bedrail or in a gap (usually greater than 5 inches) between the mattress and the rails. Movement of the bed rail, bed rail pads, shifting or movement of the mattress or changes in compression in a specialty mattress (such as an air mattress, mattress overlay or water bed) can create potentially dangerous movements or gaps. Mattresses that move (air or water beds) may also push a thin or underweight person into a gap or against a positioning pillow, resulting in harm.

How do we prevent entrapment?

- Assess the individual's risks for climbing or rolling over the rails. Work with PT or OT to determine if a bed rail is even needed and if the type and length of the rail is appropriate for the intended use.
- Check if the rail fits the bed frame; is suited for the mattress and meets the person's needs.
- The mattress should fit snugly between the rails without gaps. No gaps should be present at the head or foot of the bed. Check for any gaps between the rails that could cause entrapment of the neck, head and chest.
- Ensure the rail is correctly fitted, secure and regularly inspected and maintained.
- Staff and family must be trained in the risks and safe use of bed rails.
- Monitor people in bed and reposition them routinely.
- For some people, it may be safest to not use bed rails. Instead incorporate fall prevention methods such as low beds, frequent monitoring or bed movement alarms.

Are there guidelines for the use of side rails?

- Clinical Guidance for The Assessment and Implementation of Bed Rails In Hospitals, Long Term Care Facilities, and Home Care Settings contains an individual patient assessment. <http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/GuidanceDocuments/ucm072662.htm>
- The Hospital Bed Safety Workgroup (HBSW) has developed helpful information that can be accessed from the following link: <http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/GeneralHospitalDevicesandSupplies/HospitalBeds/default.htm>
- The Hospital Bed Safety Workgroup (HBSW) Bed Safety Entrapment Kit is available from National Safety Technologies, at the following link: <http://www.nst-usa.com>

This ALERT is intended to increase all Providers' awareness regarding risks about bedrails and mattresses for persons with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities who live in community settings. Persons on the DD Waiver are not mandated to be in compliance with Long Term Care (nursing home) regulations. However, bed rails should be used with caution, whether they are used in a hospital or a private home. Individual client assessment, routine maintenance and evaluation of the rail, including the fit to the bed and mattress is necessary to decrease entrapment risk. When in bed, the individual must be routinely monitored and repositioned.