



Reducing Staff Injuries While Working With Special Education Students

Many on-the-job school staff injuries occur while working with special education students. These injuries generally fall into two categories:

- Those related to student behavior - when students act out, flail, throw items, or intentionally injure staff
- Those related to student manipulation - when students need to be lifted or physically transferred

To help identify and address these areas where employees are injured:

- Document all employee injuries on an Employee Incident Report form.
- Inform your supervisor of any injuries, even minor ones.
- Assist with your supervisor's investigation of the injury to determine the causes and appropriate corrective actions.
- When a pattern (more than two from the same student) of aggressive or inappropriate behaviors is noted, take action. Work with your supervisor to try different strategies. Consider implementing temporary measures until those requiring more time to implement are chosen. Keep working at it!

Corrective strategies for reducing injuries associated with student behavior issues have included the following: staff training in de-escalation, modifying the student's physical school environment, modifying a behavior intervention plan, establishing a protocol to summon quick outside help when needed, and using personal protective equipment (such as pads or sleeves).

Corrective strategies for reducing injuries associated with student manipulation have included: staff training in proper lifting, modifying transfer surfaces, additional staff, and equipment to assist with lifting.

No school employee should continue to be injured on the job. For the more challenging situations, keep talking to your supervisor and the special education director, if needed, until a solution can be found to keep you and the student safe at school.