

Administrative Procedures Manual	Administrative Procedure 319.1
	Appendix A - Lifting Students Properly
	APPROVED: August 2024
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LEGAL REFERENCE:	Public School Works- M-352, Proper Lifting of Students

Using the Sling

1. Place student in sling.
 - Position center of sling under the student's spine.
 - Place leg straps under student; do not let the material fold.
 - Make sure sling opening is not large enough for student to slip out.
2. Lower sling bar down to the student. Do not let sling bar hit student.
3. Attach sling straps to sling bar as directed by manufacturer.
 - Use matching loops from each side to ensure sling is balanced. Choose loops that provide best angle and position for student.
 - Secure all clips or loops are secure.
 - Ensure straps are not twisted.
 - Ensure student's head and/or back is supported, as needed.
4. Before lifting the student, perform a safety check.
 - Examine all hooks and fasteners to ensure they will stay attached during lift.
 - Double-check position and stability of straps and other equipment.
 - Ensure clips, latches, and bars are securely fastened and structurally sound.

Lifting the Student

1. Lift the student two inches off the surface to make sure the student is secure. Check the following:
 - Sling straps are confined by guard on sling bar and will not disengage.
 - Weight is spread evenly between straps.
 - Student will not slide out of sling or tip backward or forward.
2. Check student's comfort:
 - Make sure sling does not pinch or pull student's skin.
 - Ask if student is comfortable.
 - Look for non-verbal signs of discomfort.
3. Slowly lift student as high as necessary to complete transfer.
 - Do not leave student unattended while in lift.
 - Never keep student suspended in sling for more than a few minutes.
 - Do not hold or support student's weight while in sling – this could cause straps or hooks to detach from lift.

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Lowering the Student

1. Move student's body into correct position on receiving surface before releasing student's weight.
2. Slowly lower the student onto the receiving surface.
3. Release student's weight. Do not let sling bar hit student.
4. Detach sling from lift using manufacturer's instructions.
5. Carefully remove sling from student's body, if necessary. Ensure that seated students do not fall forward as sling is removed.

Sling Care

1. Wash and disinfect after every use per manufacturer's instructions. Do not share slings between students before washing and disinfecting.
2. Air dry. Do not bleach. Do not iron.
3. Throw away disposable slings after use.
4. If the sling shows signs of wear (frayed, ripped, or with holes) replace it immediately.

Placing a Gait Belt

To place a gait belt on a student:

1. With the student seated in a comfortable position, place the gait belt around the student's waist. Ensure a layer of clothing is between a student's skin and the belt.
2. Fasten the buckle in front of the student. The belt should be tight enough that it does not slide up or down. You should easily be able to place your fingers under the belt and grasp it without your knuckles pressing uncomfortably into the student.
3. When positioned correctly, the belt will be between the bottom of the student's rib cage and at the top of the pelvis.
4. Tighten the belt if it loosens as the student stands up.
5. Remove the belt once the student is comfortably and safely seated.

Supine to Sitting

To perform a manual lift of a student from a flat or reclined position into a sitting position:

1. Perform the lift at waist-height to avoid bending over.
2. Roll the student to the side of the bed.
3. Grasp the student underneath his or her knees. Instruct the student to push off the bed with his or her elbow. Rotate the student until his or her legs are over the side of the bed.
4. With your hands wrapped around his or her trunk, assist the student into an upright position.
5. Squat down as you lower the student's feet towards the ground.
6. At least two staff members should lift students who cannot assist in the lift. For a two-person lift, one caregiver can handle the legs while the other lifts and supports the trunk.

Stand Pivot Transfer

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The stand-pivot transfer is useful for assisting a student to move from one sitting position to another (such as from a wheelchair to a toilet.) It should be used with students who can support most of their weight by standing but are too weak to take steps.

From a seated position, the caregiver performs a sit-to stand lift, pivots the student a quarter turn, and then lowers the patient onto the new perch.

- The student should be wearing shoes.
 - Make sure the student can see the surface to which he or she is transferring.
 - If the student has a weaker side, make sure the stronger side is facing the destination so they can help with the transfer.
1. Instruct the student to scoot forward toward the edge of the seat and lean slightly forward, feet flat on the floor. The student should initiate the stand with a wide base of support, feet underneath their center of mass.
 - Have the students place their hands on the armrests of the chair or next to their sides.
 - Stand facing the student with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and hold each side of the gait belt. Grasp the belt from its underside with your fingers pointed toward the student's head (use the same technique to help with turning and walking.)
 - Gently rock the student back and forth three times to build some momentum, then, on three, instruct the student to push up with her arms as you pull her close to your body as you move into a standing position.
 - If the student has trouble with his or her balance, assist the student to sit back down.
 2. To pivot:
 - Maintain your feet at least a shoulder width throughout.
 - While continuing to hold each side of the gait belt with the student as close to you as possible. Take small steps and rotate your body until the student's back is facing the perch he is moving to.
 3. To sit:
 - The student should make contact with the surface before sitting.
 - Slowly squat to gently lower the student to a seated position. Encourage the student to use his or her arms to reach toward the destination and bear some of his or her weight.
 - Keep one hand on the student once they are sitting.

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Ambulation Assistance

Student ambulation involves a caregiver supporting a student on one or both sides.

- Maintain a wide base of support.
- While walking with a student, walk behind and slightly to the side of the student.
- Position yourself on the student's weaker side.
- Use the gait belt to control movement of the student's center of mass. If the student loses his or her balance:
- Use the gait belt to direct the student's center of mass back over their base of support.
- If you need to give more help with maintaining balance, use one hand on the shoulder (not the arm or clothing) as well as on the gait belt.

If a student has a significant risk for falls, then the caregivers assisting with ambulation are at risk for injury. The risk of falls needs to be weighed against the benefits of ambulation.

- If a fall occurs, no attempt should be made to stop them abruptly. Stopping falls is a sure way to get hurt. The safest method involves guiding, slowing and lowering the student to the floor while trying to maintain a neutral body posture.
- If the student begins to fall, slowly lower him to the floor using the gait belt to control his descent. If possible, let the student 'slide' down your leg. Try to protect his or her head from hitting the ground.

Lifting From the Floor

Manually lifting a student from the floor is one of the highest risk tasks a caregiver performs.

If a student has fallen to the floor, always assess the student for injury before moving him or her. If the student can regain a standing position with minimal assistance, use a gait belt to assist the student. The student should not attempt to stand until as many caregivers assemble as needed.

For lifting fully dependent students and students unable to offer significant assistance, use a mechanical lift device. When placing slings, blankets, draw sheets or cots under the student:

1. Position at least two caregivers on each side of the student. Get additional help for larger students.
2. Bend at your knees, not your back. Do not twist.
3. Roll the person onto their side without reaching across them.
4. If using hoists, lower the hoist enough to attach slings without strain.

If assistive devices are not readily available or appropriate, you may have to perform a manual lift. Do not attempt to lift without as many staff members as needed. Kneel on one knee, count down to synchronize the lift, lift with your legs as you stand up. Do not bend your back.

Transfer Boards

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Transfer boards (also called 'sliding boards') can be used for lateral transfers in a seated position with students who are unable to bear full weight on their legs yet require limited assistance.

How to use a transfer board:

1. With the student in a sitting position, instruct them to lean towards their weaker side.
2. Place the transfer board under the student's buttocks on the stronger side of their body.
3. Position the chair to transfer to at a 90-degree angle to the surface the student is on.
4. Position the opposite end of the transfer board on the seat surface.
5. Assist the student to shift their weight from side to side to scoot along the board.
6. Once securely in their destination spot, help the student shift their body weight to the side and remove the sliding board out from underneath their buttocks.

Points to remember when using a transfer board:

- More than one caregiver may be needed.
- Ensure clothing is present between the student's skin and the transfer device. A small towel can be used as a cushion.
- Gait belts should be used when using transfer boards.
- Check boards for tapered ends, rounded edges, and appropriate weight capacity for the student

Lateral Transfer Devices

Lateral transfers – moving a person from one flat surface to another (or repositioning a student in a supine position) – are more common to hospitals and residential care facilities than schools. They are frequently completed by two-to-three caregivers.

There are a variety of assistive devices that can be used in conjunction with one another to make lateral transfers:

- Devices made of slippery materials reduce friction during sliding movements to make it easier to move a student from one place to another or reposition a student, such as slippery sheets, low friction mattress covers, or slide boards
- Draw sheets or transfer cot with handles
- Boards or mats with vinyl coverings and rollers
- Gurneys with transfer devices
- Air-assist lateral sliding aids or flexible mattresses inflated by portable air supplies

Points to remember:

- Ensure transfer surfaces are at same level and at a height that allows you to work at waist level to avoid reaching and bending over.

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- Be sure to gather as many staff members as needed to safely complete the task.
- When using a draw sheet combination use a good handhold by rolling up draw sheets or use other friction-reducing devices that have handles.
- Narrower slippery sheets with webbing handles positioned on the length of the sheet may be easier to use than wider sheets.
- When using boards or mats with vinyl coverings and rollers use a gentle push and pull motion to move the student to a new surface.