

# Soteria Strains

## Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program Guide

### Section 1 - Setting the Stage

#### Section 1.2 - Policy

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# soteria

STRAINS

*A provincial strategy for healthcare workplace musculoskeletal injury prevention.*

## Table of Contents

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Section 1.2 – Policy .....	2
Introduction .....	2
Roles and Responsibilities.....	3
Appendix 1.2.1 – Safe patient handling and mobility Policy Statement.....	5
Appendix 1.2.2 – Roles and Responsibilities.....	6

## Section 1.2 – Policy

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### Introduction

A policy is a plan or course of action intended to influence decisions, actions, and other matters. A safe patient handling and mobility policy sets a structure to ensure that patient lifts, transfers and repositioning are performed in a way that minimizes risk of injury to healthcare workers and patients. It is an important element in a program with multiple elements and guides organizational-level decisions and actions as well as frontline health care worker decisions and actions.

An effective safe patient handling and mobility policy should:

- State the organization’s commitment to the safe patient handling and mobility program
- State the intent of the policy; to protect the health of staff and patients
- State that all manual patient handling and mobility tasks are to be avoided wherever possible
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of health care workers, support workers, and administrators to help maintain sustainability of the program
- Be understood by all health care workers and reviewed on a regular basis

While a policy is necessary, it is not sufficient by itself to mitigate the risk to health care workers and patients during patient handling and mobility activities. Successful implementation of a safe patient handling and mobility program requires specific organizational and physical infrastructure to be in place beyond a policy including:

- Management commitment and support
- Appropriate, available, and well-maintained equipment
- Employee training, including specialized training for key personnel involved with the program, and regular, timely refresher training initiatives for everyone
- A culture of safety

When communicating about the policy, it is important to include patients and their families so they will understand how using patient handling equipment benefits themselves and their health care workers.

When implementing and sustaining the policy, it is critical that management at all levels consistently reinforces the intent and the importance of the policy.

Please refer to Appendix 1.2.1 for an example of a safe patient handling and mobility policy statement.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Implementing organizations must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the safe patient handling and mobility program and clearly communicate with the individuals in those roles. Ideally this work is integrated into the safe patient handling and mobility policy; however, the implementing organization may use different methods for defining and communicating roles and responsibilities.

Ensuring that roles and responsibilities are systematically defined helps maintain sustainability of the program. Training alone has been proven not to reduce musculoskeletal injuries in the health care industry.

Depending on operational needs, current organizational structure/environment, and phase of implementation, each organization should assign responsibilities and roles as appropriate then periodically review and adjust as situations change.

Roles and responsibilities should be specific, well documented, and clearly communicated to individuals and throughout the organization as required. Implementing organizations are encouraged to include these roles and responsibilities as part of job descriptions and performance evaluations. For the purposes of this publication, the roles and responsibilities have been categorized as **primary** and **supportive**. See Appendix 1.2.2 for a table outlining suggested roles and responsibilities.

Primary roles have direct impact on the implementation and sustainability of the program and include roles such as:

- Multi-stakeholder Program Coordinating Committee
- Senior Leadership Champion
- Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program Coordinator and/or Facility Lead Coordinator
- Peer Champions
- Frontline Care Providers
- Management Team and Delegated Representatives (Supervisors)

Supportive roles have direct impact in supporting and providing the direction and resources regarding implementing and maintaining the program. They include roles such as:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Union
- Occupational Health and/or Safety Staff
- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Procurement/Materials Management/Bioengineering Medical Services
- Facilities and Maintenance Management

- Infection Prevention and Control
- Patient Safety/Quality/ Risk Management
- Communications Coordinator

### **Appendix 1.2.1 – Sample Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Policy Statement**

[Organization's Name] is committed to reducing patient handling and mobility related injuries through the use of evidence-informed methods. Safe patient handling and mobility methods are essential as part of a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for employees and patients. The [Organization's Name] fosters a collaborative environment that empowers health care workers to implement the safe patient handling and mobility practices described in the Soteria Strains Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program.

[Organization's Name] and all of its employees have a shared responsibility in the implementation, evaluation and continuous improvement of the program, as well as acting in accordance with Nova Scotia's Occupational Health and Safety Act. [Organization's Name] will provide educational resources, appropriate staffing levels, training, equipment, maintenance, and evaluation opportunities to sustain the program. Health care workers will follow safe patient handling and mobility procedures, participate in and apply program related education/training, and ensure that patient handling and mobility related hazards are identified and reported. [Organization's Name] and all of its employees will collaborate to ensure that all hazards, associated with patient handling and mobility, are controlled.

[Organization's Name] expects all managers and employees to comply with this policy and the safe patient handling and mobility procedures described in the program.

## Appendix 1.2.2 – Roles and Responsibilities

PRIMARY ROLES	
Role	Responsibilities
Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program Coordinating Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as the organizational resource that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ outlines program priorities for implementation</li> <li>○ consults with key individuals</li> <li>○ coordinates and assists in navigating any challenges or issues that arise</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>An effective option is to form a working group or subcommittee of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee.</p>
Senior Leadership Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes the program's guiding principles and standards while ensuring:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ accountability</li> <li>○ delegation of authority and responsibilities</li> <li>○ recognition of safe work practices</li> <li>○ organizational reviews or audits</li> <li>○ staff perception, recommendations, and injury data contribute to the program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program Coordinator and/or Facility Lead Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the program by ensuring required elements are tracked and appropriate measures taken by key stakeholders to promote compliance</li> <li>• Recruits and educates peer champions</li> <li>• Coordinates training sessions and logistics</li> <li>• Books training facility and equipment</li> <li>• Allocates peer champions to facilitate each workshop</li> <li>• Notifies sections and units of the training schedule</li> <li>• Registers staff to attend the workshop or who are selected to attend the workshop by their manager</li> <li>• Disseminates information about workshop dates, time, and location to participants</li> <li>• Provides successful completion certificates to staff</li> <li>• Maintains training records with participants' names, specific competencies, and topics covered</li> <li>• Advocates for the patient handling and mobility program</li> <li>• Mentors and supports peer champions</li> </ul>

Peer Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes unit level individuals who will:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ be trained to deliver sessions on hazard identification, risk assessment, and mitigation strategies that pertain to safe patient handling and mobility</li> <li>○ provide training to peers</li> <li>○ take initiative to model safe handling and movement behavior</li> <li>○ act as an ongoing resource for peers</li> <li>○ participate in continuous-improvement efforts that promote, improve, evaluate training effectiveness, and sustain the program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Frontline Care Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the safe patient handling and mobility procedures once trained and competent</li> <li>• Participate in hazard assessment and ensure the health and safety of self and peers in a positive manner</li> <li>• Understand that every person is accountable and aware of the consequences of non-compliance</li> <li>• Report near misses, unsafe conditions, and substandard equipment to the supervisor in a professional and positive manner</li> <li>• Is proactive on the unit during safety huddles and/or education sessions</li> </ul>
Management Team and Delegated Representatives (Supervisors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff is:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ trained</li> <li>○ competent</li> <li>○ equipped with the required tools and resources to work safely</li> <li>○ aware of their responsibilities and held accountable for fulfilling them</li> <li>○ completing incident investigation follow-up and after action reviews</li> <li>○ making occupational health and safety a standing agenda item at all staff meetings to communicate lessons learned and after action reviews.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<b>SUPPORTIVE ROLES</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Senior Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guides, communicates, and advocates commitment to a culture of health and safety</li> <li>• Approves and supports the implementation of the Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program and Policy and work procedures</li> <li>• Provides budget and resources to adequately implement, support, and sustain the program and policy.</li> </ul>
Union Members/leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes the occupational health and safety program and prevention efforts to improve workplace health and reduce musculoskeletal injury</li> <li>• Complies with occupational health and safety legislation in a positive work environment where safe patient handling and mobility methods can occur</li> </ul>
Occupational Health and/or Safety Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advises and actively participates in the program</li> <li>• Acts as a resource for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ problem solving relationship building</li> <li>○ hazard assessment</li> <li>○ prevention and control</li> <li>○ the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assists in data collection and analysis of data</li> </ul>
Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands key elements of the program</li> <li>• Guides and oversees:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a health and safety program</li> <li>○ safe work procedures</li> <li>○ hazard assessments</li> <li>○ incident investigations to identify root causes</li> <li>○ safety inspections for incident prevention and risk reduction</li> <li>○ monitoring of program goals and effectiveness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Procurement/Materials Management/Bioengineering Medical Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in the search, purchase, and management of equipment required to implement the safe patient handling program</li> <li>• Takes a proactive role in incorporating ergonomic design criteria and maintenance implications in the equipment selection, purchase, and installation process</li> </ul>

<p>Facilities and Maintenance Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is consulted about :           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ equipment purchases</li> <li>○ installations</li> <li>○ maintenance issues and schedules</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Infection Prevention and Control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is consulted about:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ equipment selection</li> <li>○ installations</li> <li>○ housekeeping recommendations</li> <li>○ maintenance requirements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Patient Safety/Quality/ Risk Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consults to ensure patient safety indicators and patient quality are included in plans for:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ process changes</li> <li>○ facility upgrades</li> <li>○ equipment selection</li> <li>○ patient communication plans (e.g., information pamphlets, community awareness)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Communications Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists in safe patient handling and mobility program communications within the health care environment and community</li> </ul>