

Talking to Families about Medication Safety

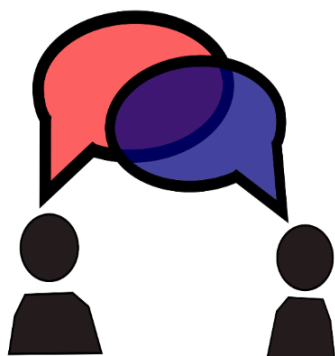
This tip sheet discusses a common issue for some Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) that can lead to medication error incidents: working with families of the individuals they serve to safely administer medication. This document may be helpful in trainings on medication safety or as a reminder to give to DSPs about how to talk to families.

Why is This Necessary?

1. Individuals who live independently **may choose to visit family on weekends or at other times.**
2. Family members **may not be aware of how to safely assist their loved one with their medications** (e.g., the Seven Rights).
3. Family members may not be aware that **some medications may cause physical damage** if not taken as prescribed.
4. Family members who do not understand the importance of medication safety **may give their loved one over-the-counter medications**, which may cause dire reactions or other harm.



Tips for Talking with an Individual's Family about Medication Safety



1. **Establish a medication safety plan** with the individual and their physician.
2. **Work with the individual to establish relationships** with their family members. Who will be responsible for helping the individual administer their medication? Do they know how to reach you?
3. **Discuss with the individual** how to notify their family about any medication changes or recent incidents.
4. Talk with the individual and family about the **dangers of missing medications**. Include the **adverse effects to watch out for in case of missed medications**.
5. **You may be able to provide the family with the doctor's information (with the permission of the individual)** so that family can easily reach out and ask questions.
6. You might be able to arrange for the family to have **a separate set of the prescribed medications for their loved ones to take during their stay** and a copy of the medication administration record (MAR) to use.
7. **Be sure the family understands the potential danger** of missing a dose or mixing prescribed medications with supplements or herbal remedies.