



Lesson 1: An Overview of Direct Support Roles in Medication Support

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

1. Describe the importance of taking medications correctly.
2. Describe good habits in the use of medication.
3. Describe common barriers to getting the best possible benefits from medications.
4. Describe how individual values and needs affect medication choices.
5. Describe your roles and responsibilities as a direct support professional in providing medication support.
6. Identify other people involved in medication support and their roles.

OJT List

On-the-Job Training (OJT) statements are observable measures of skill that a person can demonstrate. These are the OJT statements for *Lesson #1: An Overview of Direct Support Roles in Medication Support.*

- The direct support professional includes over-the-counter medications and herbal treatments, as well as prescription medications in all situations that involve medication use.
- The direct support professional can describe at least one or more possible poor outcomes as a result of taking medication improperly.
- The direct support professional can describe possible problems the person(s) they support may experience if they do not correctly take their medications.
- The direct support professional uses a single pharmacist selected by his or her employer when filling prescriptions.
- The direct support professional can describe several strategies that will reduce the likelihood of medication errors in the setting in which he or she provides support.
- The direct support professional is observed routinely following strategies that will reduce the likelihood of medication errors in the setting in which he or she provides support.
- For the individual(s) he or she supports, the direct support professional can describe specific circumstances that may increase the likelihood of adverse reactions, side effects, and other poor or unexpected responses to medications.
- The direct support professional can accurately identify his or her duties in the area of Medication Support.
- The direct support professional can accurately describe the medication support needs for each person he or she supports.
- The direct support professional is aware of physical barriers to taking medications experienced by each person he or she supports.
- The direct support professional is aware of cognitive barriers to taking medications experienced by each person to whom he or she provides supports.
- The direct support professional is aware of circumstances that may cause persons he or she supports to be resistive to medications supports. (for example, cultural views, mental illness, or dementia)
- The direct support professional can accurately describe any federal laws, rules, or regulations that apply to his or her roles in medication support.
- The direct support professional can accurately describe any state or local laws, rules, or regulations that apply to his or her roles in medication support.
- The direct support professional can accurately describe any employer policies, procedures, and practices that apply to his or her roles in medication support.

Portfolio List

Portfolio samples are examples of work a person could place in a portfolio based on the content of this lesson. These are the Portfolio suggestions for *Lesson #1: An Overview of Direct Support Roles in Medication Support.*

- The direct support professional (DSP) researches a commonly used medication that has been found to cause problems when taken incorrectly. He or she writes a short summary describing the medication and the outcomes of misuse. The summary includes reflection on how the population the DSP supports or homes to support would be affected. (For example, is this population more likely or less likely than the general population to experience these problems? Why? What could be done to reduce the risk if there is one? etc.)
- The direct support professional (DSP) writes a reflective essay regarding habits that support reduction in medications errors. The essay clearly describes the support setting the direct support professional currently works in or hopes to work in. The needs of the person(s) being supported and other key stakeholders (e.g., other DSPs, family members, or professionals in the setting) are taken into consideration in the essay. The reasons for practicing the habits or using the strategies are clearly described. Specifically the DSP explains why certain habits and specific strategies will reduce medication errors.
- The direct support professional gathers evidence that demonstrates how s/he has worked effectively with an individual by using specific strategies that have reduced unnecessary side effects from medications for the person. The DSP shows evidence of targeting side effects and sharing these with medical professionals. Using documentation from the work setting or medical records (with permission) to demonstrate the changes and progress, the direct support professional writes a summary statement that describes the process and what was learned.
- The direct support professional writes a reflective essay on personal use of medications. The essay would describe a choice about medications that the person has made. For example, a time when he or she chose not to take a medication as prescribed by a doctor or a choice to take an over-the-counter medication differently than recommended on the label or a choice to use herbals or non-medication treatments instead of or along with another medication. The essay also describes why he or she made this choice and the outcome of the choice. The essay includes a discussion on what the implication would be in a support setting for both the DSP and the person being supported. (Would this choice be honored? Why or why not? If negative outcomes were experienced what might happen? How does that affect the situation?)
- The direct support professional collects a group of work samples that reflect different roles and responsibilities he or she has had in medication support. A summary statement describing the roles and responsibilities in medication support connected with work samples is included. The statement describes how individual needs and characteristics of persons being supported along with the setting in which supports were provided affected these roles and responsibilities.



The Importance of Taking Medications Correctly

Directions: Write the responses to the following after getting the information from your employer.

If you work for an agency or organization they may track medication errors. If so, they may use that information to make changes in how medications are given. Ask your trainer or supervisor if medication errors are tracked and summarized at your organization. If so, find out the following:

- What are the most common errors that happen in your organization?
- What are the causes?
- What would improve the situation?
- What will you do differently now that you know the result?

If you work directly for a person with disabilities or for a family you may want to ask the following:

- What problems (if any) have been experienced due to medications?
- Were any of these problems preventable by a direct support professional or could the DSP have reduced the effect by paying closer attention?
- What things have been done to reduce the chances of this problem happening again?
- What new information, education or training can be made available to the DSP to change this problem, if any?



Questions About Medications

Medication Support Toolkit in the College of Direct Support

Before taking a new medication (prescription or over-the-counter), it is important to review some information. The first list will help you focus on collecting some key information during a visit with a health care provider. The second list can be taken to a pharmacy when selecting a new over-the-counter medication. Direct support professionals can review and share these lists with people they support before a medical appointment or before going to a pharmacy. They can use it as a tool to remember to get all the information needed when assisting someone with learning about new medications.

I. Prescription medications: Get the following information from your health care practitioner. You can ask a pharmacist also if you need further clarification.

1. What is the medication called?
2. What is it for?
3. How often do I need to take it?
4. What should I do if I miss the time for my dose?
5. Are there special directions for this medication (For example, “Eat before taking this medication”)?
6. Do the other medications and therapies I take affect this medication? (Or will this medication affect my other medications and therapies?)
7. Are there any circumstances under which a person should not take this medication? (For example: pregnancy, certain disorders, when fasting, with alcohol?) What would happen?
8. Are there side effects I need to know when I take this medication?
9. Are there certain symptoms that may indicate a serious problem (adverse reactions) after taking this medication? If so, what are they?
10. What happens if I don't want to take this medication?
11. Are there alternatives to this medication?



Questions About Medications

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II. Over-the-counter (OTC) medications, herbals and nutritional supplements:

You should know the following.

1. What is it for? (How will I know if this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement does what it says it is supposed to do?)
2. How often can I take it?
3. Are there special directions for this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement? (Such as: “Take with food”)?
4. Will this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement affect my other medications and therapies? If so, how?
5. Are there any circumstances under which I should not take this OTC medication, herbal or nutritional supplement? (For example: pregnancy, certain disorders, when fasting, with alcohol?) What will happen if it is taken?
6. Are there certain symptoms that may indicate a serious problem after taking this OTC medication, herbal, or nutritional supplement? If so, what are they? What should I do?

Ask the pharmacist or other health care provider about anything that is not clear after reading the label.

Accommodating Personal Choice in Medication Use

Directions: Write your responses to the following questions and statements that appear on Screen 21 of the lesson.

Think about a choice you have made about medications that was contrary to the doctor's recommendations. For example: a time when you chose not to take a medication exactly as prescribed by a doctor; a choice to take an over-the-counter medication differently than recommended on the label; a choice to use herbals or non-medication treatments instead of or along with a prescription medication.

1. Describe the choice: What was the medication? What were the recommendations? What did you do instead? Was this a one-time difference or do you make this choice often? Why did you make this choice?

2. What happened as a result of this choice? Thinking back on it, do you think this was a wise or effective choice? Would you make it again?

3. If someone you supported made this choice about his or her medications, would you be comfortable with this choice? Why or why not? If negative outcomes were experienced by the person, what might happen? How does the outcome experienced by the person you support affect your role in the situation?



DSP Roles in Medication Support

Directions:

You should know exactly what duties you will have related to medication support. Using the notes function of this program or the companion booklet for the course, list all the duties related to medications for which you know you are, will be, or might be responsible. List them here.

When you are done, share the list with your supervisor. Does your supervisor have anything to add? Are there things on your list that are not part of your specific responsibilities? List your supervisor's additions here.

Use this information to help guide you in your learning during this course.



Knowing Individual Needs

Directions: Answer these questions about each individual to whom you provide medication supports.

1. How does the person's age, weight, height, and gender affect medication use, if at all?

2. What types of medications or therapies does the person use? Why does the person use these medications or therapies?

3. Does the person have barriers in understanding medications? If so, what types? (For example, remembering to take medications on time, recognizing medications, language or reading difficulties.)

4. Does the person have physical barriers to taking medication? If so, what types? (For example, difficulty opening pill bottles, trouble swallowing or placing medications in his or her mouth.)

5. Does the person have circumstances that will make it less likely to take medications as prescribed or when asked? (For example, cultural views, mental illness, dementia, or autistic spectrum disorders.) If so, what are the circumstances?



Knowing Laws and Policies

You need to know all the laws, rules, regulations, and policies, procedures, and practices that affect your role.

Ask your employer to share with you which laws, rules, and policies apply to medication supports in the state and agency in which you provide medication supports. Make sure you know the limitations of your role. Do not attempt to take on duties for which you are not trained or licensed. This type of activity may result in a suspension or revocation of your certification or credential (if applicable).

List any laws and limitations here:

