



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

Danielle's Law Training

# Responsibilities & Quality of Care

- You have an important role in caring for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Recognizing medical issues and obtaining appropriate care is vital
- Good communication and monitoring of individuals you are assisting provides quality of care
- Your actions can save a life



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

Life Threatening  
Emergencies are  
potentially fatal

Need to identify  
those situations  
that are life  
threatening  
emergencies

Not all medical  
situations are life  
threatening  
emergencies

# Health Threatening Conditions

## Some medical situations may be health threatening, but not life threatening

- Obtain appropriate medical care for health threatening conditions, such as calling a doctor
- Always follow established medical protocols for any individual you support, such as checking blood sugar or providing physician prescribed asthma medication
- Report all health conditions to your supervisor and monitor the condition

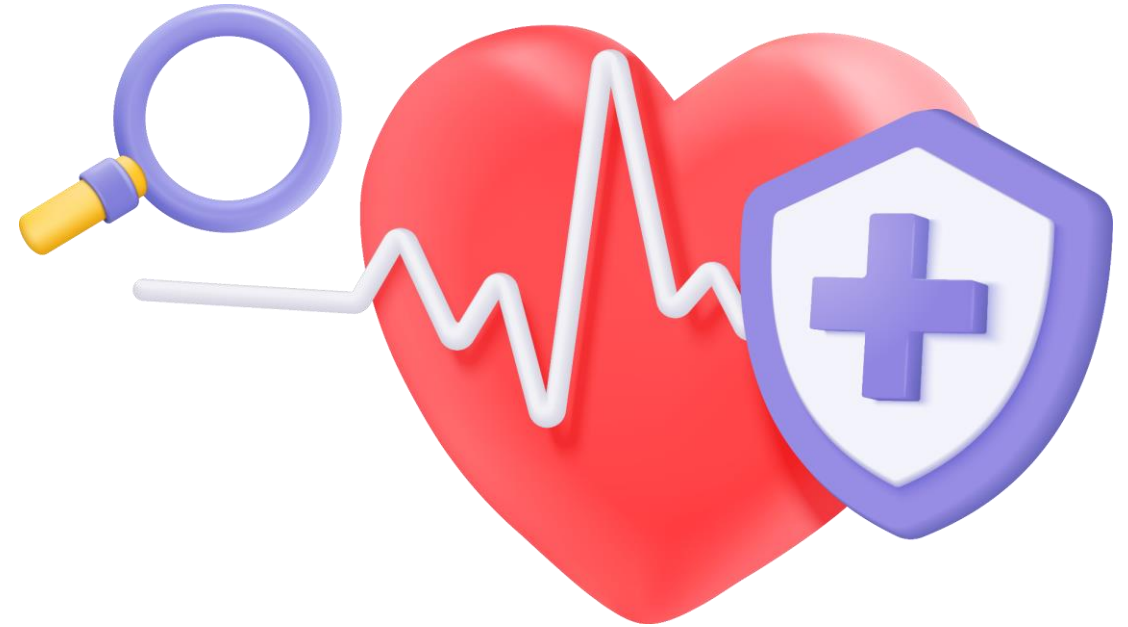
# Health Threatening Conditions

- Examples of Health Threatening Conditions:
  - Sprained ankle
  - Bleeding controlled with pressure
  - Seizures typical to the person that last under 5 minutes
  - Minor burns/cuts
  - Flu symptoms
- If the health threatening condition worsens or becomes life threatening, call 9-1-1 immediately



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

**Life threatening emergencies** are those situations when immediate intervention is necessary to protect a person's life or if serious impairment or dysfunction of a person's body functions or organs/parts may occur



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

- Examples of life threatening emergencies include, but are not limited to:
  - Unconsciousness
  - Persistent chest pain or discomfort
  - Not breathing or trouble breathing
  - Severe bleeding
  - Choking
  - Severe, persistent abdominal pain with or without vomiting
  - Serious head injury
  - Shock
  - Some seizures
  - Confusion or disorientation
  - Stroke symptoms



# Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of a Stroke “FAST”

- To identify stroke symptoms, use the acronym “FAST”:
  - **F** = Face: **Ask the person to smile.**  
*Does one side of their face droop?*
  - **A** = Arms: **Ask the person to extend both arms out.**  
*Does one arm drift downward?*
  - **S** = Speech: **Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence.**  
*Are the words slurred? Can the person repeat the sentence correctly?*
  - **T** = Time: **Notate the time signs/symptoms of the stroke first began.**  
*Call 911 immediately.*



# Symptoms of a Serious Head Injury

- Examples of serious head injuries include, but are not limited to:
  - Dizziness
  - Headache
  - Blurred vision
  - Nausea/vomiting
  - Confusion or disorientation, slurred speech
  - Lethargy, irritability or excessive sleepiness
  - Bleeding from one or more orifices
  - Numbness or tingling
  - Force of injury caused damage to wall or dents sturdy object
  - Seizure

# When Seizures Are Considered Life Threatening Emergencies

- Seizures that may be life threatening:
  - First time seizure
  - Lasting longer than 5 minutes
  - Back-to-back (3 or more in a row)
  - Result in serious injury
  - Person is not breathing once seizure stops
  - Occur in someone who is pregnant
  - Occur in someone who has diabetes



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

- Some questions to determine if 9-1-1 should be called:
  - Could this condition be potentially fatal?
  - Could the condition get worse and become life threatening if you drove the person to the hospital?
  - Could moving the person on your own cause further injury?
  - Does the person require the skills/equipment of emergency medical personnel?



# Identifying Life Threatening Emergencies

- If you identify a life threatening emergency, CALL 9-1-1 immediately
- *Don't* call a supervisor or co-worker first when a life threatening emergency exists
- If you are not sure if the situation is life threatening, call 9-1-1

# Calling 9-1-1

- Tell the 9-1-1 Operator:
  - Your name and number
  - Location of incident
  - What happened
  - Condition of person including any special conditions
  - Care being provided
- Don't hang up until the dispatcher instructs you to do so



# Danielle's Law and End of Life

- DDD interprets “life-threatening emergency” to include individuals who have a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order or individuals at the end of life receiving hospice or palliative care.
  - Staff still need to call 911 for an individual receiving end-of-life care even if the life threatening emergency is related to the medical condition.



# Danielle's Law and End of Life (cont.)

- Individuals at the end of life should be permitted to have their and their guardians' decisions regarding medical treatment followed
- Staff must call 911 if a “life-threatening emergency” does occur
  - Inform the 9-1-1 operator of the Practitioner Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) or Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order
  - Follow the recommendation of emergency service personnel
  - The emergency medical professionals who respond will determine what type of medical care should be provided.



# Scenarios Activity

- Determine if each situation is a life-threatening emergency requiring a 9-1-1 call
- Decide how you would handle the situation



# Scenario One

You provide individual supports to Suzie in her own home. One afternoon, as she is walking down the driveway to get her mail, you witness Suzie trip over an uneven patch on the sidewalk and fall to her knees. She cries out in pain and does not immediately stand up. When you reach her to offer assistance, you notice that both her knees are skinned and bleeding. You help her to her feet.

## Scenario Two

You are assisting several people from the van to their day program to start the day when Carlos slips on some ice and falls backwards, hitting his head on the pavement. He doesn't move right away and seems stunned by the fall. You asked him if he is okay and attempt to sit him up, but he doesn't really respond, although his eyes are open.

## Scenario Three

One night Ida gets up to use the bathroom and trips over the outstretched legs of her roommate sitting next to her. She falls and doesn't quite catch her fall with her hands. You witnessed her head hit the carpet. She gets up right away, rubbing her head. She is crying a little bit and says that it hurts. When you check her head, she has very faint redness and a little swelling on the left side of her forehead.

## Scenario Four

You are assisting Carmen during her shower. She is seated in a shower chair as you help her dry off. You hear a wheezing sound when she breathes. You lean closer and hear a whistling noise every time she breathes in. You know Carmen has a history of asthma and has asthma medications. After Carmen takes her asthma medications, she is still wheezing strongly.

## Scenario Five

You are a job coach assisting Harry at his new job in the kitchen at the local restaurant. Harry is in charge of food preparation today, and is chopping salad items at the counter with a sharp knife. Just as you turn to leave, since he is doing well on his own, you hear him cry out in pain. The palm of his hand has a long gaping cut across the whole width of his hand. It is bleeding profusely. You grab a clean towel; wrap it around his hand, and apply pressure. The blood continues to soak right through the thick towel.

## Scenario Six

Ilene is volunteering at a food bank, where she helps to stack and sort the canned goods into different bins. She does not realize one of the metal bins has a jagged edge, and when she reaches past it, she slices her forearm and it begins to bleed. The cut is long and painful but not deep. You help her to clean the wound and stop the bleeding.



## Scenario Seven

Frank is finishing his breakfast. He has not shown much appetite this morning, and has only picked at his food, which is unusual for him. Throughout the meal, he has rubbed his left shoulder and arm and made grimacing faces. He nods every time you ask if he feels okay. As he passes you his dishes to put in the sink, you notice he is sweating and pale. He starts to rub his chest and says it feels like someone is standing on his chest.

## Scenario Eight

Jerome is sitting in his chair, working on a puzzle, when his body stiffens, then he begins to breathe deeply before he slumps back in the chair and begins to have jerky movements. You loosen the shirt around his neck and ensure he is breathing. Jerome has a known seizure disorder, so you know to time the seizure as he typically has a seizure that lasts about 2-3 minutes a few times a week. After 3 minutes have passed, his jerky movements stop and he opens his eyes and starts to sit up. He is breathing fine now, but appears tired.

## Scenario Nine

Molly is out to eat with her peers and staff at the mall, when she begins to make gurgling sounds while swallowing. She begins to cough and some food comes out of her mouth. She continues to sound like she is gagging and her eyes are watering. She appears to stop breathing and you jump up to use back blows and abdominal thrusts to assist her. It works right away and a piece of food comes out.

## Scenario Ten

Will calls you to say he cannot go to work today because he has a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. He says he did not sleep well last night and is very tired. He is sniffing the whole time you are on the phone and his voice sounds very scratchy. He says he is starting to get the chills and is going back to bed.

# Responding to Life Threatening Emergencies

- **CHECK** the person to determine if he/she is experiencing a life threatening emergency
- **CALL 9-1-1 IF the condition is life threatening**
- **CARE** for the person until help arrives



*You are not required to call 9-1-1 in non-life threatening situations, but appropriate medical care is **always** required*

# Who is Danielle?

- 32 year old Danielle Gruskowski lived a full and active life as a member of her family and of the Carteret, NJ community.
- She founded the “Carteret Specials” group dedicated to enriching the lives of local children with developmental disabilities.



# Danielle's Law

***Danielle's Law was named in her memory to increase necessary 9-1-1 calls for life threatening emergencies.***

***The law emphasizes the importance of staff calling 9-1-1 in life threatening emergencies for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or traumatic brain injuries.***



# It's the Law: Responsibilities

## Staff

- Anyone who works with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or traumatic brain injury must call 9-1-1 in the event of a life threatening emergency
- Not calling 9-1-1 or delaying the call in a life threatening emergency is a violation of the law

## Employer/Provider

- Ensure staff are trained to identify life threatening emergencies and know when to call 9-1-1
- File an incident report according to Division procedures
- Maintain a record of all 9-1-1 calls

## Department of Human Services

- Ensure training is provided to service providers
- Maintain records of provider calls to 9-1-1
- Review potential violations of Danielle's Law
  - Situations where a reasonably prudent person did not act in a life threatening emergency
- Maintain records of violations

# Penalties for Non-Compliance with Law

- If you do not call 9-1-1 in a life threatening emergency, penalties may include:
  - Termination from employment
  - Fines up to \$25,000
  - Loss of license (for healthcare professionals)



# How are Danielle's Law Violations Reviewed?

- Reviewed by OPIA & DDD Risk Management Staff
- Criteria:
  - Was the condition a life threatening emergency?
  - Would a reasonably prudent person have known at the time of the incident that the condition was life threatening?
  - Outcome of incident not considered
- Recommendation made to Assistant Commissioner for final decision



# Review & Quiz

- Review of health threatening conditions
- Review of life threatening emergencies
- Frequently Asked Questions Quiz



# Quiz Question: True or False?

**Direct care staff often know the person best, so their input into medical conditions is important.**



# Quiz Question: True or False?

**All medical situations and conditions are life threatening emergencies.**



# Quiz Question: True or False?

**All 9-1-1 calls must be for life threatening emergencies.**





## Quiz Question: True or False?

**A health threatening condition may need immediate medical care such as driving someone to the doctor's office or an emergency room.**



# Quiz Question: True or False?

**Examples of life threatening emergencies would be a heart attack or stroke.**



## Quiz Question: True or False?

**An example of a health threatening condition would be seizures typical for the person lasting less than 5 minutes.**



## Quiz Question: True or False?

**If someone is having trouble breathing, but is conscious and able to talk to you, it would be safe to drive them to the hospital yourself.**



## Quiz Question: True or False?

**When you identify a life threatening emergency, you should call 9-1-1, provide care and then call your supervisor to report the situation.**



## Quiz Question: True or False?

**Health threatening conditions are not emergencies, however appropriate and prompt medical care is always required, such as calling a doctor.**



# Wrap Up

## Acknowledgement of Training (Form or Certificate)



*For more information, training documents, and to view this Danielle's Law PowerPoint slide deck, refer to DHS, DDD, Danielle's Law Website below:*

[www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/providers/staterequirements/danielle/](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/providers/staterequirements/danielle/)