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EVS, Protective Services Pilot Safety Ambassadors Program

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There's a spill in the hall but I'm late for a meeting and someone probably already reported it.

I saw a sign saying "Caution: Wet Floor" but it didn't look wet so I walked across it because I didn't have time to go around.

While these thoughts don't make Cincinnati Children's a safer place, we've all had them when we're in a rush. At times, we're talking on the phone, emailing, or texting while walking and don't even see a potential hazard.

"When we see something that isn't safe, such as a spill on the floor, something blocking part of a hallway or a pothole, we should take the next step to help make it safe for everyone," says **Donna Mingerink**, consultant, OSEH.

A new Safety Ambassador Program is designed to encourage all CCHMC employees and contractors to take a moment to respond to unsafe conditions and behaviors, and recognize positive safety behaviors as well.

This grassroots program, initiated by Occupational Safety & Environmental Health (OSEH) is designed with Cincinnati Children's CARES behaviors in mind: We strive to be Courteous, Attentive, Respectful, Enthusiastic and Safe with fellow employees, patients, families and visitors.

The program is being tested with employees in Protective Services and Environmental Services (EVS). Safety ambassadors from these departments are trained to observe, correct, report and track unsafe conditions. They also engage employees by positively reinforcing safe



DeeNean Taylor, operations supervisor, Environmental Services, is one of 32 ambassadors on the lookout for safety.

actions and modeling safe behaviors.

“Protective Services officers have always been trained to watch for and help resolve unsafe conditions,” says **Tim Cox**, corporal, Protective Services. “With the Safety Ambassador Program, we are formally recognizing and encouraging safe behaviors, and asking our fellow CCHMC employees to do the same.”

Safety Ambassadors on Watch in Pilot

“Safety ambassadors are the logical next step in safety after introducing spill pads and umbrella bags,” says **David Campbell**, manager, EVS. “Our goal is to reduce injuries to employees, patients, families and visitors.”

Twelve officers (sergeant level and above) from Protective Services and 20 managers from EVS are part of the pilot phase. While the program will likely be rolled out to all employees eventually, OSEH started with these departments because their employees are out and about in the medical center each day.

The Safety Ambassadors Program began as part of a 2015 Strategic Plan initiative to reduce employee injuries in non-clinical areas. “As we worked on this initiative, it became clear that patients, vendors, visitors and contractors would all benefit from the efforts and actions of safety ambassadors,” Mingerink says.

Program Aims to Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls

In any busy healthcare setting, hazards exist that may lead to slip, trip and fall injuries. “We have a lot of people on the move,” says Mingerink. “Add to that a spilled beverage or a wet umbrella, and someone might get hurt.”

On rounds, safety ambassadors comb the Burnet concourse and other areas to identify and resolve potential hazards. If they can't make a situation safe on their own, they establish an interim safety measure and contact the right departments for a permanent solution.

Ambassadors Provide Positive Guidance

Safety Ambassadors also praise employees who demonstrate safe behaviors. The idea is that with a bit of encouragement and guidance, employees will feel supported in doing the right thing and practicing safe behaviors.

“As we encourage all employees to help keep our environment safe, we want to do it in a way that shows how much we care,” Cox says. “We don’t want to see employees falling and getting hurt. Safety ambassadors are helping to promote the fact that safety is everyone’s personal responsibility.”

Safety ambassador responsibilities include:

- Identifying and responding to unsafe conditions and behaviors before an adverse event occurs.
- Empowering employees who demonstrate safe behaviors such as using umbrella bags, spill pads, lids on food and beverages and holding hand rails on stairs.
- Inspiring fellow employees to find and fix unsafe conditions or activities.
- Modeling desired safety behaviors.
- Encouraging near-miss and injury incident reporting to 803-OUCH.
- Recording safety observations and tracking them against program goals.

Next Steps and How You Can Help

Future plans include an online training module for safety ambassadors that would combine concepts from well-established CCHMC education modules, such as Error Prevention, Crucial Conversations and High Reliability Organizations.

“An online course will make it easier for others to become safety ambassadors and will help reinforce key education principles,” Mingerink says.

“Everyone can do their part by being alert, maintaining a focused travel path and quickly identifying problem areas that may need attention,” Mingerink continues. “If you see a spill and don’t have quick access to a spill pad or a wet floor sign, ask someone to stand at the spill to warn others while you make a call and find a spill pad.”

Any employee can also help prevent accidents. One safety ambassador found that when he provided an umbrella bag to a coworker with a dripping umbrella, the colleague eagerly accepted it and thanked him.

Before the pilot phase ends, safety ambassadors will help identify goals for 2014, Mingerink says. Meanwhile, if employees or contractors have questions or suggestions for the program, they may contact OSEH at 636-9680.

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