

# CareCertify LLC

## Adult Day Services Training Series

ADS-03

# Supervision & Safety of Participants

*Participant Guide*

Adult Day Services Training Series · Audience: Direct-Contact Staff · Volunteers · Subcontractors · Aides · CE Hours: 1.0

## Supervision Is Active, Not Passive

Keeping participants safe is the center's most basic duty. Many participants have cognitive changes, mobility limits, or medical needs that make active supervision and a safe environment essential. Minnesota's rules require staffing ratios based on participants' ability to respond to emergencies, and safe practices throughout the day.

This guide covers supervision, ratios, fall and environmental safety, wandering, transitions, and choking — and how to respond when something goes wrong. Supervision means knowing your participants and staying attentive, so everyone goes home safely.

### Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Apply supervision and staffing-ratio requirements
- Use knowledge of participants' needs to keep them safe
- Identify and reduce environmental and fall hazards
- Respond to wandering and elopement
- Prevent choking and respond when something goes wrong

## Section 1: Supervision and Staffing Ratios

Adult day centers must maintain staffing ratios based on participants' ability to respond to emergencies — at least one staff per five participants who can't self-preserve, and one per eight who can. A person trained in first aid and CPR must be present at all times.

Supervision is active, not passive: know where participants are, how they're doing, and what each one needs. Never leave participants unsupervised, and adjust your attention to those with the greatest needs.

## Section 2: Knowing Your Participants

Safe supervision starts with knowing each participant — their abilities, needs, risks, and individual care plan. Know who is at risk for falls, wandering, choking, or medical events, and what each person needs to stay safe. Orientation focuses on participants' functional impairments for exactly this reason. When you know the person, you can anticipate and prevent harm rather than just react.

## Section 3: Environmental and Fall Safety

Most injuries are preventable through a safe environment. Keep paths clear and floors dry, ensure good lighting, provide safe seating, and use proper technique and equipment for any transfers or mobility help. Falls are a leading cause of serious injury in older adults; reduce hazards, watch participants at risk, and respond promptly when someone needs help so they don't get up or move unsafely on their own.

## Section 4: Wandering and Elopement

Wandering is common among participants with dementia, and elopement — leaving the center unsupervised — is a serious safety event. Know which participants are at risk, manage exits according to the center's plan, and use engagement and routine to reduce restlessness. The moment a participant is unaccounted for, alert staff, begin the search procedure, account for the others, and call 911 if the participant isn't quickly found or may be in danger.

### Account for everyone

Knowing where every participant is, at all times, is the heart of supervision. Periodic head counts and attentive eyes prevent elopement before it becomes an emergency.

## Section 5: Transitions and Transportation

Transitions — arrivals, departures, bathroom trips, moving between activities, and outings — are higher-risk moments when participants can be missed or injured. Account for participants during every transition, follow safe transportation and transfer procedures, and verify that participants are released only to authorized people at pickup. Extra attention during transitions prevents many incidents.

## Section 6: Choking and Food Safety

Mealtimes carry real risk. Know which participants have swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) or special diets, and follow any texture-modified diet orders exactly. Supervise meals attentively, watch for signs of choking, and know how to respond — this is why a CPR and obstructed-airway-trained person must be present. Follow food safety practices to prevent illness. Mealtime supervision saves lives.

## Section 7: Responding When Something Goes Wrong

When something goes wrong — a fall, medical event, injury, or behavioral crisis — stay calm, keep the participant safe, and get help. Call 911 for emergencies and follow the center's procedures. Don't move an injured participant unless they're in danger. After any incident, document it objectively and report per policy so the cause can be addressed (emergencies are covered in depth in ADS-05).

## Section 8: Safety Is Everyone's Job

Participant safety is shared by every staff member, volunteer, and subcontractor. Everyone watches for hazards and at-risk participants, reports safety concerns and near-misses, and helps maintain proper ratios and attentive supervision. A culture where everyone takes responsibility for safety — and speaks up about concerns — is what keeps participants safe and sends them home well.

## Key Terms

| Term               | What it means  |
|--------------------|--|
| Active supervision | Knowing where participants are and how they're doing, at all times.            |
| Staffing ratio     | The required staff-to-participant ratio by self-preservation ability.          |
| Elopement          | A participant leaving the center unsupervised and potentially at risk.         |
| Dysphagia          | Difficulty swallowing, raising choking risk.                                   |
| Transition         | A higher-risk moment such as arrival, departure, or moving between activities. |
| Near-miss          | An event that could have caused harm; reporting it helps prevent harm.         |

## Check Your Understanding

1. What are the staffing ratios and why do they matter?
2. Why does safe supervision start with knowing each participant?
3. What should you do when a participant is missing?
4. Name three higher-risk transition moments.
5. How do you keep mealtimes safe?

## What's Next

### Looking ahead

Next, ADS-04: Medication Assistance covers safe medication support within Minnesota's requirements.