

Arresting Falls

The practice of attempting to arrest falls places the 'rescuer' at high risk. The urgency of the action does not allow the rescuer to adopt correct positioning and the momentum of the falling weight places large forces on muscles and joints of the arms and spine.

Prevention of the risk of falling should be considered during the design of activities. For example, path of travel and method of support for the student during a mobility activity should be selected to minimise risk of falls for the student.

In some cases, it may be preferable to allow a fall to occur, e.g. onto a grassy or softer surface, or protecting the head of the student. If possible, staff may attempt to slow, or 'direct' the flow of the movement of the assisted person to the ground, rather than prevent it.

Many children with motor impairment may have already, or will need to learn to fall as a valuable life skill. Unnecessary risks may be taken if staff are misinformed about the perceived need to 'rescue' students during falls. Staff should be provided with accurate information and trained in procedures relevant to each student.

The school should also inform parents/caregivers of:

- the processes in place to manage students who are at high risk of falls,
- requirements to assist with safety of students and staff e.g. a student who is continually at risk of falling may need to wear protective clothing and
- the ongoing risk to staff and the departmental policy which aims to minimise risks to staff and students

Templates for risk management processes are available at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/docs/healthsafety/mh-template.doc>

A worked example using a mobility activity is available at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/mh-risk-mobility.pdf>

More information is available on the Creating Healthier Workplaces website at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/hs-mod-manual-pack.html>