Dysphagia: Considerations for Risk Management

The following **key words/issues** may prompt risk management questions regarding dysphagia.

- Choking
- Coughing
- Edentulous
- Positioning
- Weight loss
- Aspiration pneumonia
- Frequent treatment of pneumonia
- Frequent upper respiratory infections
- Refusal of meals
- Change in behavior prior/during/post meals

When there is concern regarding an incident involving dysphagia, the following **questions** may be useful.

- Does the agency have a policy/procedure regarding dysphagia?
- Does the agency have a nurse and how is he/she involved?
- Does the individual have an eating plan?
- Was the eating plan being followed?
- Were staff, involved in the incident, trained/educated regarding the individual’s diagnosis/eating plan?
- Has everyone been educated regarding the plan and any changes to it?
- Has the individual seen the PCP?
- Has an evaluation (by a speech pathologist) been recommended?
- When is the evaluation scheduled?
- Has there been a change in the person’s diet?
- Has there been a change in the person’s dental status?
- Has there been a weight loss?
- Has there been a medication change? Are medication levels in range?
- Has there been a change in mental status?

*Note: This list is not all inclusive. Other questions may be necessary depending on the circumstances of the incident.*

Suggestions for **corrective action**:

- General education regarding dysphagia
- Person-specific training for staff regarding precautions, diet textures, eating plans
- Discussion with PCP for possible evaluation or re-evaluation for dysphagia
- Use of dysphagia tools located on the PCHC website –
  - The Eating, Drinking, Swallowing Checklist
  - The Dysphagia Resource Directory
  - Tube Feeding Resource Packet

Learn more at [www.pchc.org](http://www.pchc.org)