

## Safe Practice Effective Communication (SPEC)

SPEC is a 4-day training course designed to prepare staff to manage situations of potential and actual violence in the safest and least restrictive manner possible, and in accordance of the 2008 Health and Disability Services Restraint Minimisation and Safe Practice Standards. It aims to enhance communication and engagement skills, assessment and management of risk, and clinical decision-making to support staff in balancing the rights, wellbeing and safety of all within the environment.

The course begins with looking at historic and current restraint practices in the context of ongoing improvement in best practice, which supports staff to engage with the rationale and process for change. SPEC highlights the principles of person-centered, trauma-informed and recovery focused care, as well as a move to pain-free techniques and a minimisation of restraint in a prone position. Day one of the SPEC course takes staff through the key points of the Standards and applying these to clinical settings.

The first day also covers communication and de-escalation, including skills, barriers and communication styles. There are a number of activities designed to help participants develop strategies for enhanced communication and engagement with those who are emotionally escalated. A key part of this is supporting staff to consider their own triggers and emotional responses to stress and conflict, as well as the physiology of 'Fight and Flight', and how to manage this effectively.

Also included is a review of the 'Cycle of Escalation', including recognising early signs of emotional arousal, and most effective responses to each of the levels of the cycle. The day completes with video examples of negative and positive de-escalation techniques, followed by role-play of a range of de-escalation scenarios by participants.

Day Two takes a more in-depth look at the issues of caring for those who have a history of trauma, making clinical decisions that place person at the centre of care, and working to the principles of recovery. Also covered is relevant legislation and issues of policy. Breakaway techniques are introduced on day two, and aim to teach staff how to get free from holds and grabs effectively, using the least amount of force possible.

Day three begins with the physical health issues to be considered with restraint, and assessing physical risk as part of decision-making, with the aim of maximizing safety and minimizing risk. Documentation issues are also covered, as well as understanding rights and responsibilities. The remainder of day three involves standing restraint techniques, from least secure support holds to more secure holds. Also covered is ending restraint safely, and safety issues to consider with activities such as going through doorways or down stairs in restraint holds.

Day four covers safely taking a person the knees or to a prone position if required for safety reasons, and supporting them back to a standing position. Also covered is ending restraint in the prone position, standing someone from a supine position, and the safest and most effective restraint of the legs where required for safety.

The course ends with practice scenarios, structured to enhance participant understanding of the role of communication in de-escalation and the management of aggression.