



# Saving Lives Through Training:

## How Discovery Living Inc. Improved Staff Preparedness with the Fatal Five Training

Discovery Living Inc., a Cedar Rapids-based provider serving 150+ adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), used a University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD) mini-grant to deliver Fatal Five training. Staff gained practical tools to recognize and prevent the five leading preventable causes of death in people with IDD. Survey results show high satisfaction, highly engaging material, and measurable increases in staff confidence and preparedness.

### BACKGROUND & CHALLENGE

People with IDD face higher rates of preventable health problems and premature death. The most common conditions associated with death (aspiration, dehydration, bowel obstruction, seizures, and infection, plus gastroesophageal reflux disease) are often overlooked or mismanaged. Discovery Living leadership wanted a structured way to educate all staff, but needed external support to implement it.



### GOALS

Provide staff with robust education on the Fatal Five. Equip employees with skills to spot early signs, seek timely medical attention, and prevent crises. Reduce reliance on emergency interventions and prevent hospitalizations.



### IMPLEMENTATION



Funded by a \$5,000 UCEDD mini-grant



March 27, 2024:  
Agency-wide introduction session



Training format:

- Seven modules (4 hours total, NADSP accredited)
- Interactive knowledge checks, visual aids, videos, downloadable tools (stool charts, seizure trackers, etc.)
- Self-paced with certificates of completion

## Results & Impact

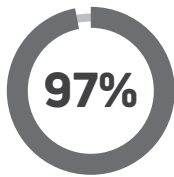
Overall course rating: 4.15 out of 5 stars



Collectively, this brought an increase in staff discussions about the Fatal Five and prompted proactive follow-ups with supporters and medical providers for early intervention. As a result, this training boosted DSP confidence and skills in answering questions.



rated training "very" or "highly relevant"



reported being better prepared to *recognize* Fatal Five conditions



reported being better prepared to *prevent* Fatal Five conditions



were able to immediately apply knowledge on the job



would recommend the training to others

## Real-World Impact After Training

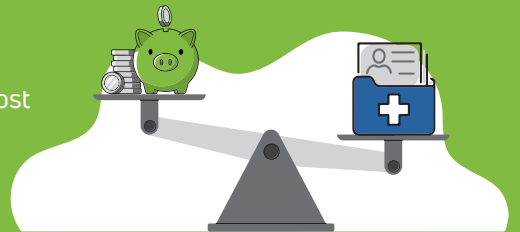
One year after implementing Fatal Five training, Discovery Living experienced significant reductions in emergency and urgent care utilization, resulting in measurable healthcare and staffing cost savings.

### ↓ 37% REDUCTION IN ED & URGENT CARE VISITS



\$274,410

Estimated Medical Cost Savings



\$15,237

Staffing Overtime Savings

630+ HOURS

Staff Time Redirected to Proactive Support



"The modules are short and easy to understand."

"I didn't know that much about aspiration."

"I love the videos, knowledge checks, and scenarios."

## Conclusion

Discovery Living demonstrated that targeted Fatal Five training not only improves staff preparedness and confidence, but also reduces preventable medical crises and avoidable healthcare spending. With measurable reductions in emergency utilization and associated costs, the program shows a replicable model for improving both health outcomes and organizational sustainability.



25400 US Hwy 19 North, Suite 197, Clearwater, FL 33763

(727) 437-3201

Info@ReplacingRisk.com

www.ReplacingRisk.com

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