

What can we learn?

Speaking up

What happened?

A member experienced a reduction in hearing in one ear – like they were in a tunnel until eventually it felt like a cotton swab was stuck in their ear. Because there was no pain, the member did not report the issue to senior activity staff. That night, the member experienced intense pain in the ear that continued to increase. The member was able to alert the front desk and was seen by a Health Services Officer (HSO) and transported to the local hospital where they were diagnosed and treated for a severe ear infection. At some point before being seen by the HSO, the member lost consciousness, fell, and sustained other minor injuries because of the fall.

What are the concerns?

Suffering in Silence can have serious consequences for your health and well-being, as well as for family, friends, and colleagues.

Reporting Culture. Some of the reasons why members may not speak up include fear of stigma, lack of awareness, denial, embarrassment, or distrust.

Observe and report. In this case, the lack of pain kept the member from reporting their condition to the activity staff, but if a member is acting in a way that seems unusual, that's a good time to pause and check in with them.

What can we do?

Speak up. Speaking up can be a crucial step in getting the help and support that one needs, as well as preventing further complications or worsening of the condition. Any unusual physical or mental experiences should be reported to senior activity staff:

- These experiences could be symptoms of far more serious conditions that, if untreated, could result in even more serious effects.
- Doing so can facilitate timely diagnosis and treatment, which can improve the chances of faster recovery.
- Can reduce the psychological burden of suffering in silence and feeling isolated or ashamed.

Safety briefings. Remind members and activity participants of the importance of reporting any occurrence – even if it doesn't seem serious – to senior activity staff (e.g., activity director, safety officer).

- If you notice a member behaving in a way that is not usual for them, check in with them, "Are you ok? I'm noticing that you seem... (state what you are seeing) ...Is there anything I can do to help?" Let someone on the activity staff know what you saw and where you are concerned.

Activity Staff. Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where people feel comfortable to share their concerns and experiences, and to ask for help if needed. Don't wait to check in! Follow up with the member immediately.