

IntellectAbility's Fatal Five Training is Committed to Improving Health Outcomes

Discovery Living Reports 37% Reduction in Emergency and Urgent Care Visits After the Fatal Five Training



CLEARWATER, FL, UNITED STATES,
August 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ --
Discovery Living Inc., a Cedar Rapids,

Iowa-based provider supporting more than 150 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), reported a 37% reduction in emergency department (ED) and urgent care (UC) visits during the year after implementing IntellectAbility's Fatal Five Training for all staff. The findings highlight the potential impact of equipping frontline supporters with practical

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knowledge to recognize early warning signs of preventable health conditions before they become medical emergencies.

Discovery Living recorded 254 emergency department and urgent care visits in the year before training, compared with 159 visits in the year following implementation. Even after excluding people who were among the highest users of emergency services during the study period, visits still declined from 227 to 152, a 33% reduction.

People with IDD experience disproportionately high rates of preventable emergency department visits and hospitalizations, often because underlying health concerns go unrecognized until they become serious. The Fatal Five refers to five preventable and treatable health conditions that are among the leading causes of premature death for people with IDD: aspiration, bowel obstruction, dehydration, seizures, and infection/sepsis. By helping staff recognize early warning signs and respond sooner, organizations may reduce unnecessary emergency care while improving health outcomes.

Kim Larimer, RN, the Health Services Coordinator and nurse consultant at Discovery Living shares "The Fatal Five training has been a huge asset for employees when it comes to helping them feel more confident as a direct support professional. The benefit of this training for us has been educating our employees, catching health medical issues sooner, and less time and money

being utilized. The domino effect is that our individuals then receive the best care, stay healthy, and continue to live their best life."

The reduction in emergency utilization also represents an estimated \$274,410 in avoided medical costs over one year. Organizations also realized operational benefits. With each emergency visit averaging approximately 6.5 staff hours, the reduction in emergency and urgent care utilization translated into hundreds of staff hours that could instead be devoted to providing direct support.

"Emergency department visits often begin with subtle health changes that go unrecognized," said Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility. "When direct support professionals know what to look for and feel confident communicating their concerns, they can help people receive support sooner, often before a situation becomes a medical emergency. Education empowers supporters to recognize risk earlier and respond with confidence."

Discovery Living also reported meaningful improvements in staff preparedness following the training:

- 97% reported being better prepared to recognize Fatal Five conditions.
- 92% reported being better prepared to help prevent Fatal Five conditions.
- 95% rated the training as very or highly relevant.

The findings are based on a one-year evaluation following implementation at Discovery Living and represent promising real-world results that may warrant additional evaluation across other provider organizations.

The full Discovery Living case study is available from IntellectAbility and details how targeted health education helped improve staff confidence, reduce preventable medical utilization, and strengthen organizational sustainability. [Read more here.](#)

[About IntellectAbility](#)

IntellectAbility improves the health, safety, and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through evidence-based tools, training, and person-centered practices.

Mahima Dave, MPH
IntellectAbility
+1 727-437-3201
mahima@replacingrisk.com

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