

# Appropriate Use of Emergency Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities at an Independent Living Facility

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## Abstract

**Background:** Individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) interact with the emergency system at higher rates than their typical peers. However, research has not currently examined the efficacy of safety programs designed to educate individuals with IDD about emergency preparedness and using emergency services appropriately.

**Purpose:** The current study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of health and safety training in improving how those with IDD living at an independent living facility use emergency services appropriately.

**Study Design:** A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test research design

**Methods:** The Independent Living Scale (ILS), Modified Performance Assessment of Self-care Skills (PASS) referenced dispatcher scale, and researcher-developed Emergency Awareness and Ability to Respond Scale was administered prior to and immediately following a 4-week educational program focusing on accessing EMS and the health care system.

**Results:** A statistically significant difference was found between the modified ILS pre-and post-test data (Wilcoxon Test Analysis,  $P=0.011$ ) and the third subsection of the PASS- Referenced Dispatcher Scale, mean adequacy ( $P=0.018$ ). No significant correlation (Spearman's Correlation,  $P=0.846$ ) was found between the participants' perspective subsection of The Emergency Awareness and Ability to Respond Scale, the participants' pre-test score on the ILS and between the participants' perspective subsection on The Emergency Awareness and Ability to Respond Scale and the case manager/caregiver subsection pre-test score on The Emergency Awareness and Ability to Respond Scale (Spearman's Correlation,  $P=0.414$ ).

**Discussion:** The increased score on the modified ILS and the mean adequacy of the PASS referenced Dispatcher Scale suggests the potential of targeted safety programs to improve emergency preparedness and safety for individuals with IDD. The lack of correlation between self-awareness, ILS score, and case manager score may indicate that self-awareness is not a good measure of safety skills in this population.

**Conclusion:** The small sample size of this study as well as the lack of a significant difference of the non-modified ILS indicates the need for further research within this population. However, the increased score on the modified ILS and the mean adequacy of the PASS-Referenced Dispatcher Scale indicates that targeted programs suggest the potential to increase safety among individuals with IDD.

**Key Words:** Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Emergency Preparedness, Independent Living