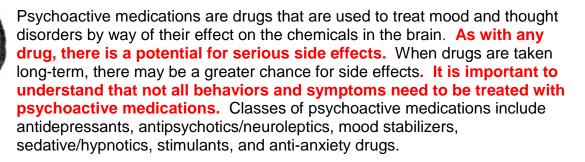
DDD Office of Quality Assurance - Caregiver Alert #15 (10-7-05)

# Safe Use of Psychoactive Medications

# WHAT ARE PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS?



## HOW CAN CAREGIVERS EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS?

- \* Do not stop medications suddenly unless directed by the doctor!
- \* Check with the doctor and pharmacist about multiple drug interactions.

# Look for other reasons for the behavior before starting medications

- ✓ Could the person have pain that causes the behavior?
- ✓ Does the person have a hearing or vision problem that hasn't been detected?
- ✓ Has the person had a fall or injury that wasn't noticed?
- Could the person have an undetected medical problem, such as a thyroid problem or a vitamin deficiency?

### Know why the person is taking each medication

✓ There should be a clear reason for the use of each medication

### Has the medication helped the problem it is being used for?

- Keep records of the behavior or symptoms the medication is being used to treat and bring it to appointments with the health care provider
- ✓ Keep records of how prescribed dugs have helped or worsened behaviors

# Has the medication caused any side effects or created more problems?

- Know the person's baseline, or normal, appearance and behaviors and report any changes to primary care provider
- $\checkmark$  Sometimes challenging behaviors respond to a decrease in medications.

This flyer can be downloaded from the DDD website at: http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/publications.shtml





#### DDD Office of Quality Assurance – Caregiver Alert #15 (10-7-05)

General changes to report when using any medication (not all people experience all side effects):



#### Sudden or unusual skin color or temperature:

- ✓ Bluish, red, yellow or pallor
- ✓ Rash or other unusual markings
- ✓ Feels hot or cold to the touch



#### Sudden or unusual bowel or urinary change:

- ✓ Diarrhea or constipation
- ✓ Frequent or infrequent urination
- ✓ Urination difficult, delayed or painful
- ✓ Bedwetting

#### Sudden or unusual walking or gait changes:

- ✓ Falling down
  ✓ Slow or shuffling walk
- ✓ Stumbling, poor balance, unsure of footing



#### Sudden or unusual change in movement level or in muscles:

- ✓ Seems slow, moves in slow motion, trouble getting started
- ✓ Jittery, antsy, pacing, can't sit still, constantly jiggling or pumping legs. has to get out of chair after short period of time
- ✓ Muscle rigidity or stiffness
- ✓ Nausea, vomiting or gas

#### Sudden or unusual change in sleep:

- ✓ Sleeps longer or shorter
- ✓ Trouble getting to sleep
- ✓ Nightmares or bad dreams



#### Sudden or unexpected change in eating or drinking:

- ✓ Eating more or less
- ✓ Drinking more or less

### 

#### Sudden or unexpected change in speech:

- ✓ Drooling or dry mouth
- ✓ Seems to be slurring speech
- ✓ Doesn't seem to be talking much any more

# 

#### Sudden or unexpected fatigue:

- ✓ Suddenly doesn't want to get up in the morning
- ✓ Tired, day-time sleeping
- ✓ Sedation, lethargy, malaise
- ✓ Grogginess

#### Sudden or unexpected mood changes:

- ✓ Grouchy, irritable, hard to get along with
- Explosive behavior out of character
- ✓ Crying, tearful, sad, withdrawn
- ✓ Personality change

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#### Sudden or unexpected trouble concentrating:

- Trouble paying attention and remembering things
- ✓ Trouble performing activity, work, or play

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