

OHCA Position Statement

The Personal Support Worker in Home & Community Care

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) advocates for the creation of a strong, reliable and accessible home care system that fully supports Ontarians, who wish to remain independent, receive care and age at home. An effective health care system will be created when the skills of all members of the team are appropriately integrated and utilized to deliver care.

OHCA recognizes and values the important contribution of the Personal Support Worker (PSW). PSWs are the largest class of workers in the home care system. They provide care and assist clients of all ages, and their families/caregivers, with tasks of daily living, personal care and hygiene, restorative/activation activities and home management activities. Services are provided in homes and apartments in the community, in long-term care facilities, congregate housing settings and day programs.¹ PSW activities are supportive and non-medical in nature. Typically, PSWs provide care that clients could be expected to perform by themselves if physically and/or cognitively able.

Personal Support Workers have a broad range of abilities. They provide for the comfort, safety and well-being of their clients, and also demonstrate sensitivity and respect for those in their care. The PSW's positive attitude, abilities and approach is critical to the well-being and health of the people they support. PSWs typically spend the greatest amount of time, as compared to the other members of the health team, with the client. They are often the first to alert the health care team to subtle changes in a client's condition and through their close relationship with the client have insight into their needs. As members of the health care team, PSWs are actively engaged in collaboration with other team members to provide their knowledge about the client in order to inform the plan of care.

PSWs have a skill and knowledge level that equips them to provide high quality personal care, supportive care for ongoing conditions and/or cognitive impairments, assistance to the family/caregiver with activities or respite,

¹ Personal Support Workers are those who have completed a standardized training program. This program replaces and consolidates Health Care Aide and Home Support Worker (Level I, II & III) training. Reference to the PSW in this document reflects the broadest scope of definition and includes personal care – assistance with activities of daily living which may include help with dressing, bathing, grooming, feeding, toileting, mobilization and transferring; and homemaking – essential housekeeping tasks necessary to enable the individual to remain at home in a safe and acceptable environment, including cleaning, laundry, meal preparation, shopping, banking and transportation. The term home support services, used in much of Canada, describes the person who provides personal care, homemaking services and/or respite to enable the individual to remain at home in a safe and acceptable environment.



assistance with medications and caring for palliative care clients and their families.

It is the position of the OHCA Board that PSWs occupy a very important supportive role in home care assisting people to continue to live and age at home independently. This role is highly valued and respected by all OHCA members. Indeed, the role of the PSW is considered the backbone of care delivery in the home care system.

Today, over half of the referrals for Community Care Access Care services come from acute care hospitals (OACCAC). In 2006, 17.2 million hours of personal support and homemaking were provided through Ontario's Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC). To support all Ontarians to age at home, the home care system will also need to expand to support people who live with chronic conditions and the frailties of aging. Research has demonstrated that even a small amount of support by a PSW can positively impact the ability of families to support a person in their own home.² National home care research shows that the contribution of the PSW to home care clients is vital to delaying or avoiding admission to residential and acute care services.³

The OHCA believes that successful health care teams will recognize the role and value of PSWs and ensure their active contribution. Further, as a system, every effort must be made to support people to live independently in their community with an improved quality of life. Ensuring the right care by the right provider in the right place and always as close to home as possible is essential to an effective health care system.

The OHCA, *the voice of home care in Ontario*, represents Canadian home care service organizations that deliver quality home care to Ontarians throughout the province. The OHCA advocates for a strong, dependable and accessible home care system for Ontarians. OHCA members are accredited through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) or the International Standards Association (ISO).

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²Hollander, Marcus Unfinished Business: The Case for Chronic Home Care Services, A Policy Paper October 2004

³ Hollander, Marcus Providing Integrated Care and Support for Persons with Ongoing Care Needs: Policy, Evidence and Models of Care (presentation), October 2006

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